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Human Sigma Optimization: Engaging Employees and Customers

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Human Sigma Optimization: Engaging Employees and Customers

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We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and

quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any

and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

Dissertation Committee
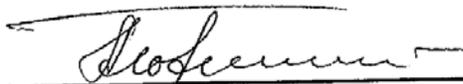
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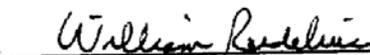The opportunity to learn about myself and identify self-as-instrument is a chance for profound reflection. As my doctorate journey has challenged my norms and given me many new perspectives, I realize that I could not have completed this on my own. I am fortunate to have so many people who encouraged me along the way.

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Abstract

In business, one of the ways of measuring customer satisfaction and loyalty is to measure the engagement level of a business's customers. Research shows that customer engagement is directly related to the engagement level of the business's employees. It is therefore equally important to measure employee engagement. Measuring engagement levels of employees and customers provides a business an opportunity to work toward increasing engagement levels of both. When the engagement levels of the employees and the engagement levels of the customers are above the median averages, Human Sigma is achieved. Human Sigma was developed as a way to measure and manage the human systems of business. Businesses that achieve Human Sigma have, on average, financial performance that is 3.4 times higher than businesses that rank in the bottom half on both measures (Fleming & Asplund, 2007).

There is a great deal of research about the importance and benefits of employee engagement and customer engagement, but no specific model for creating engagement. The researcher speculated that there were common activities occurring in businesses that had achieved Human Sigma. The researcher constructed the Human Sigma optimization theory and identified eight activities that appeared to optimize Human Sigma. A positivistic multiple case study was conducted. The results from the six case studies and a cross-case analysis supported the framework of the model. The Human Sigma optimization theory provides a model of activities for business owners and managers to utilize when building and maintaining engagement with employees and customers.

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Chapter 1

Background

Problem Statement

Creating engaged teams is a key opportunity for organizations that link success to customer satisfaction. Within the financial services sector, the majority of a financial institution's growth comes from its current customer base, so the way that employees serve the customer sets the stage for the future opportunity with that customer (Lorge, 2004: Shelton, 2004). In order to achieve and sustain growth, businesses need to provide dynamic training and disciplined sales management and will also need to assess the external sales experience and results for the employee and the customer (Dinkin, 2006; Schroder, 2002). One way to increase customer satisfaction, as well as bottom-line performance, is to have a highly engaged workforce of knowledgeable and skilled employees (Bassi & McMurrer, 2007: Tyler, 2005; Schroder, 2002;).

In any business, one of the keys to success is giving customers more than they expect (Case & Carranza, 1994). Service is an essential ingredient of profitability; it is a matter of day-in and day-out culture. Teaching employees to meet customer needs is critical if a business wants to keep customers. Since employees are human, not every employee–customer transaction results in a happy customer; customer relationships therefore become increasingly important (Caffarella, 1985; Case & Carranza, 1994;). Finding ways to increase the engagement rates of employees and customers has a great payoff: Increased retention, increased productivity, increased customer loyalty, and increased profit are all reasons to explore engagement (Coffman, 2004; Rath, 2004).

Lev (2001) focused on the physical, financial, and intangible assets of organizations. Organizational capital, the organization's human systems, should be thought of as one of the organization's main competitive advantages. How can an organization measure this? By measuring employee and customer engagement levels, organizations will be able to better determine the value of their intangible assets. How employees connect with each other, how employees connect with customers, and how the customers' relationships are personalized are all elements of engagement that contribute to the value of the organization's assets. Lev argues that employees and customers, just like a corporate brand, are assets that need to be accounted for (2001).

Fleming and Asplund (2007) developed Human Sigma as a way to measure and manage the human systems of business. Human Sigma helps companies assess and improve processes that produce a known and predictable outcome—a highly engaged employee–customer encounter (Fleming & Asplund, 2007). Human Sigma assesses employee engagement and customer engagement levels and different combinations thereof. Engagement is the driving force behind smoothing variation, increasing profitability, and generating stock increase. Engagement scores are leading indicators of the financial performance that a company hopes to achieve (Fleming & Asplund, 2007). Gallup has identified 12 key questions—the Q12 survey—that serve as indicators of a company's degree of employee engagement. Gallup has also identified 11 key questions—the CE11—that serve as indicators of a company's degree of customer engagement. Unlike Six Sigma, which uses systems efficiency as its measure, Human Sigma assesses human efficiency by quantifying the engagement of both employees and customers of the business. Using standard employee

survey questions and standard customer survey questions, businesses can measure and trend employee and customer engagement levels as a way to increase overall satisfaction and build loyalty to the organization on both sides of the counter (Coffman, 2004). Extensive research by the Gallup Organization has established a chain that links the actions of managers with the engagement levels of employees and, in turn, with the engagement levels of customers. Fleming and Asplund's meta-analysis studied 1,926 business units in 10 different companies and showed that organizations that adopted Human Sigma management systems have outperformed their peers by 26% in gross margin and 85% in sales growth over a one-year period.

Employees and customers can be classified into three engagement categories: engaged, not engaged, and actively disengaged. Engaged employees are loyal and psychologically committed to their job and the organization. Engaged individuals are two to three times more productive than other employees and are responsible for most of the innovations and creative ideas within a company. A 2004 study showed that only 28% of U.S. employees were engaged (Coffman). Individuals who are not engaged are neither positive nor negative forces in an organization and are best described as being in a holding pattern. Coffman's study showed that 55% of U.S. employees were disengaged. Actively disengaged individuals are physically present but psychologically absent. These individuals insist upon sharing their unhappiness with others. Coffman found that 17% of US employees were actively disengaged. Judging by these numbers, companies have a great opportunity to build employee engagement, which in turn builds customer engagement in their organizations.

In a service industry, attention needs to be paid to employees' interactions with an organization's customers; people are human, and humans can be unpredictable. Gallup's data showed that when workgroups with engaged employees served engaged customers, the end result was something more than the sum of its parts (Fleming & Asplund, 2007). As service quality is key to customer loyalty and retention, and therefore to higher profits for the organization, it becomes increasingly important to work towards having more engaged teams in a company (Augut, Peire, & Salanova, 2005; Smith, 2007). Identifying activities that can lead to higher engagement for employees will lead to higher customer retention and increased sales and profits for the company (Elsey, 2005; Finnengan, Frank, & Taylor, 2004; Legge & Wiley, 2006).

The researcher's intention was to contribute to the body of human systems knowledge specifically as the theory addresses a model to optimize Human Sigma. As the business world looks for ideas on how to build engagement, this theory may serve as a road map for managers and employees to use as they work to increase both employee engagement and customer engagement.

Research Purpose

The purpose of the research was to test the Human Sigma optimization model created by the researcher and to develop a theory about activities that can be utilized in business organizations to increase both employee engagement and customer engagement. The researcher was interested in finding out how managers and employees work together in engaged and financially successful businesses. The researcher developed a model containing what the researcher believed to be key activities in optimizing employee engagement and

customer engagement. The researcher elicited four components of managing a successful team from the book *Human Sigma* (2007) in which Fleming and Asplund wrote, "The Human Sigma management approach starts by accepting human nature and then uses it to manage employees, motivate them, accelerate their development, and engage customers' emotions" (p. 49). These four components align with the researcher's experience with managing highly engaged teams and are further supported by existing literature. As a next step toward contributing to and advancing the existing body of research, the researcher added eight activities that the researcher believes contribute to Human Sigma.

Research Question

Engaged employees grow company earnings at a rate that is 2.6 times faster than that of companies with disengaged employees. Engaged customers represent, on average, a 23% premium in terms of share of wallet, profitability, revenue, and relationship growth than the average customer (Fleming, Rath, & Conchie, 2008). For today's businesses, both employee engagement and customer engagement are essential. For today's businesses, both employee engagement and customer engagement are essential, and managers must strive to optimize both. Building on this foundation, the research question was: What activities can managers and employees engage in to optimize Human Sigma within the financial services industry?

Importance of this Study

Much of the current research on engagement is through the Gallup Organization. More and more organizations and individuals are linking research to aspects of engagement and prior theories in literature. The researcher has examined many sources of literature and utilized that knowledge base to develop a model in which multiple sources of literature were

used to validate the model throughout the research. There is little current research on specific

activities in which individuals can participate to increase their engagement levels. Based

upon her experience, the researcher believes that employees can positively impact

engagement levels of both employees and customers through eight basic activities.

Furthermore, based upon her experience and current literature on the broader topic of

engagement, the researcher wondered about the impact of identifying and focusing on

specific activities relating to managing employees, motivating employees, accelerating

employee engagement, and engaging customers' emotions. Identifying basic activities in

each of those four categories may provide businesses with a road map to building

engagement levels of employees and customers and, ultimately, for increasing the financial

success of the business.

Research Design

Due to the researcher's desire to build a theory that could be tested, the researcher

chose a positivistic multiple case-study design. Each case was a single business unit (branch)

within financial institutions that were above median scores on both employee engagement

and customer engagement as defined by Gallup's database. A more thorough and complete

description of the research design is documented in Chapter 3.

Definitions of Key Terms

Five key terms used throughout the research warrant precise definition:

Human Sigma®: the state of high employee engagement and customer engagement.

Human Sigma is the management approach developed to measure and manage human

systems in business. Human Sigma "offers a disciplined approach to measuring, managing,

and improving the performance…of your customers and employees to drive financial performance" (Fleming & Asplund, 2007, p. 24). Companies that have created an optimum level of engagement have outperformed their competition by 26% in gross margin and 85% in sales growth, because engaged customers spend more and return more often (Fleming & Asplund, 2007). Human Sigma links the quality of the employee and customer encounters, weaving together a consistent method for assessing each encounter and a disciplined process for improving future encounters (Fleming et al., 2005).

Q12®: the 12 questions Gallup has used to measure the aspects of employee engagement that link to business outcomes (Coffman, 2004).

CE11®: the 11 questions Gallup has used to measure the aspects of customer engagement that link to business outcomes and financial performance (Fleming & Asplund, 2007).

Employee Engagement: a measure of the extent to which employees are psychologically committed to their roles as a result of having their performance-related workplace needs met (Coffman, 2004). Engaged employees are more productive employees, more profitable, more customer-focused, and more likely to withstand temptations to leave the organization (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

Customer Engagement: a measure of the extent to which customers are committed to a company, a brand, and/or the employees of that company (Coffman, 2004). Customers who are fully engaged represent an average 23% premium in terms of profitability, revenue, and relationship growth as compared to the average customer (Fleming & Asplund, 2007).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This literature review first discusses Human Sigma in depth and then covers key aspects of employee engagement and customer engagement to provide a background of relevant literature on these subjects.

Human Sigma

Human Sigma focuses on reducing variability and improving performance. Every interaction an employee has with a customer represents an opportunity to build or diminish that customer's emotional connection to the organization. Work groups whose employees are positively engaged have higher levels of productivity and profitability, better safety and attendance records, and higher levels of retention (Wagner & Harter, 2006). Not surprisingly, they are also more effective at engaging the customers they serve. Companies that make employee engagement and customer engagement a priority have a positive shift in the overall business success (Heskett et al., 1994,).

Gallup's research reveals that business units that score above the Gallup database median on both employee and customer engagement metrics are, on average, 3.4 times more effective financially (in terms of total sales and revenue, performance to target, and year-over-year gain in sales and revenue) than units that rank in the bottom half on both measures. These units are also twice as effective financially as units that are high performers on one, but not both, of these engagement metrics (Fleming & Asplund, 2007). Business units on the

lower levels of engagement are in need of improvement: Those that engage employees without engaging customers have become too inwardly focused and have lost direction. Those that engage customers without engaging employees, over time, will see diminished customer engagement as well (Fleming et. al. 2008).

Customer engagement and employee engagement interact to promote financial performance. Fleming and Asplund's (2007) research shows that organizations that have adopted Human Sigma management systems have outperformed their peers by 26% in gross margin and 85% in sales growth over a one-year period. These numbers present a compelling argument for businesses to determine what they might equate to in terms of impact on the business and the customer. In today's competitive environment, these numbers indicate a great opportunity to enhance and retain engagement levels and to thereby build loyalty and create brand ambassadors in the customer base. It is estimated that a 5% increase in customer loyalty can produce profit increases from 25% to 85%. Quality of market share, quality of employee care, and quality of customer care all deserve as much attention as quantity of market share (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990).

Frontline workers and customers need to be the center of management focus. Successful managers support investments in their people, providing technology, and linking employee performance to outcomes. Doing so puts the service–profit chain to work and establishes relationships between profitability, customer loyalty, employee satisfaction, and productivity. As Heskett et al. (1994) stated:

Profit and growth are stimulated primarily by customer loyalty. Loyalty is a direct result of customer satisfaction. Satisfaction is largely influenced by the value of

services provided to customers. Value is created by satisfied, loyal, and productive

employees. Employee satisfaction, in turn, results primarily from high-quality support

services and policies that enable employees to deliver results to customers (pp. 164-

165).

The service chain has the opportunity to link with each customer; it also has the

opportunity to break with each customer. Focusing on engagement results in strong links in

the chain, for both employees and customers, and leads to Human Sigma.

Employee Engagement

Employees who are engaged will find ways to do more quality work in less time, feel

compelled to come up with solutions to issues they identify, and are more likely to

consistently be at work (Baumruk, Gorman, Gorman, & Ingham, 2006; Beer & Eisenstat,

2000; Davis, 2006). When employees become one with their roles, they then begin to feel

that they are acting with total involvement or, as defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), people

have reached a flow state, and little conscious control is necessary for their actions.

Csikszentmihalyi explained that certain essential components are necessary for flow at work:

clear goals, immediate feedback, challenges that match skills, and areas where action and

awareness merge to create a feeling of empowerment. Workplace engagement is a powerful

factor when it comes to improving business processes and customer service, as the best

solutions come from those employees who are truly committed to the success of the

organization and the customer.

Frederick Herzberg performed studies to determine which factors in an employee's

work environment caused satisfaction or dissatisfaction (1993). He developed the

motivation-hygiene theory to explain these results. Herzberg found that the satisfiers at work are motivators and the dissatisfiers were hygiene factors (maintenance factors). The following six factors were found to cause satisfaction in the workplace: achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth. Herzberg argued that job enrichment is required for intrinsic motivation, so a job needs to have sufficient challenges, and employees should be given increasing levels of responsibility to avoid boredom and lack of motivation. Engaged employees are a company's most productive and efficient workers; they feel connected emotionally, socially, and even spiritually to the company's mission, vision, and purpose (Fleming & Asplund, 2007).

After many studies, Gallup has created the Q12® Engagement Survey (Coffman, 2004). The survey consists of twelve questions investigating employee expectations, recognition, and relationships. The survey is designed to measure employee attitudes, productivity, retention, profitability, and safety levels. Gallup maintains a rolling three-year database of responses to the survey questions which companies can use to compare their performance to outstanding performers, rather than just average performers.

Recognition. The combination of increasing job dissatisfaction in the workplace and a decreasing number of knowledge workers following the baby-boomer generation is a recipe for disaster. It is increasingly important to understand employee motivation in order to hire and retain top-performing team members. In order for an organization to retain top-performing employees, the employees must feel that they are making a difference for the organization and the organization is giving something back. Team members who feel that they have control or ownership of their work and receive recognition for their efforts have

greater feelings of engagement. It is important to publicly congratulate and recognize those responsible for success (Lewis, 2009). With employees facing a more diverse job market than before, determining what motivates employees and what it takes to retain them is an important job for every manager in the workplace. Determining the engagement of individual team members and of the team as a whole provides a guideline for a manager. It also offers insight into what the manager and company can do to make the team members feel even more connected to and engaged with the organization and their role with that organization (Childres et al., 2005).

Recognition is an important part of engagement. Meaningful recognition means that the true essence and uniqueness of the individual is recognized and honored. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) reported that creating an organization based on recognizing people for their strengths is more effective than one that focuses on weaknesses. Buckingham (2005) added that great leaders and managers recognize and celebrate the success of each individual and build the recognition process around the individual, so each member of the organization feels unique rather than feeling like a number.

Performance Expectations and Development. "Although organizations tend to perform better when they use specific practices to make employees accountable, to set goals and priorities, and to establish a performance culture, they achieve the best results by undertaking all three simultaneously" (Leslie, Loch, & Schaninger, 2006, p.64). Employee engagement tends to increase at companies that prioritize all three of these practices. Managers who combine these complementary practices, rather than using only one at a time, will see the most improvement their organizations' performance and employee

communication. "Engaged employees want their organization to succeed because they feel connected emotionally, socially, and even spiritually to its mission, vision and purpose" (Fleming & Asplund, 2007, p. 160).

Engaged employees show an enthusiasm for their jobs that goes above and beyond their required work activities (Peppers, 2008). In an effort to get the most out of employees, it is important to involve employees in determining how to serve customers and how to meet the goals of the organization (Woodward, 2007). With all of the changes in today's marketplace, it is critical for employees to understand the changes and have a voice in how the company makes changes. In order for an organization to be successful, employees must have the opportunity to express their concerns and ask questions about how they can meet customers' needs now and in the future. In addition, a consistent focus on feedback and coaching is important to helping employees determine the effectiveness of their work adaptations and as a way to acquire the employee feedback necessary to drive continuing change within the organization.

Performance metrics can be used to positively influence engagement. Employees who can easily understand their performance goals and how those goals are measured engage more fully with the company (Lazalier, 2007). Employees who can quickly link their own performance to the performance of the company will be better positioned to execute against their goals and feel greater satisfaction in the achievement of those goals. In addition to performance expectations, opportunities for professional development are another important motivator for increased employee engagement (Bolster, 2007). Hulme (2006) asserts, "an employee's relationship with his or her immediate supervisor is important to retention.

Young employees are seeking supervisors who can act as mentors and prepare them for leadership roles" (p. 24).

The Hay Group (2007) study identifies providing clear goals and direction to employees, promoting collaboration, and ensuring that employees have clear development opportunities as ways of increasing employee engagement within an organization. "In order to achieve peak performance, it is vital to manage people effectively by recognizing their needs" (Schorer, 1998, p. 29). Bolster (2007) contends that employees who are provided with performance expectations and feedback are more motivated and inspired. Daily meeting sessions can be held for all employees, together, as a way to educate, motivate, and inspire them; similar meetings can be held in each department (Bolster). When employees have clear performance expectations, personal initiative, learning motivation, and proactive behavior all increase (Sonnentag, 2003).

Discussion. Managers have an opportunity to create an environment where employee opinions are welcomed and valued. "To continuously create shareholder value, companies must attract and retain not only the right customers but also the right employees" (Duboff, 1999, p. 6). The relationship between employee engagement and innovation strongly indicates that engaged employees are far more likely to suggest or develop creative ways to improve business processes (Wagner & Harter, 2006). Albert Hirshman (1970) extensively studied employee voice and the impact of voice on employee loyalty to their organization. Employees can choose to exit an organization or use their voice to change problematic situations. Those allowed to use their voice were more loyal to the organization.

Engaged employees are also far more likely to find creative ways to solve customer problems. Their solutions often customers in the innovation and improvement process. One factor that influences customer engagement is employees' willingness to continue to learn and grow in their jobs in order to be able to meet customers' changing needs. When asked whether they were giving customers new ideas to solve problems, 74% of engaged employees strongly agreed that they shared new ideas with their customers, in contrast to just 13% of actively disengaged employees (Krueger & Killham, 2006). When asked whether they had grown in their ability to positively impact their customers, 85% of engaged employees strongly agreed, while only 19% of actively disengaged employees strongly agreed (Krueger & Killham, 2006). Before an organization can manage the employee and customer experience in tandem, the organization must understand how customers and employees think and how they react. When managers take this great opportunity to foster engagement, they develop Human Sigma in their companies.

"When employees know what makes customers passionate about a brand, and when managers allow workers to seek out solutions to customers' concerns, both employees and customers benefit" (Fleming & Harter, 2001, para. 14). Engaged employees will help their company deliver superior performance and will support changes to products and process because of their passion for the organization. Engaged employees are also stronger brand ambassadors. In a Gallup survey, 81% of engaged employees strongly agreed that they knew what their company stood for and what made them different, while only 11% of actively disengaged employees felt the same way. In addition, the most engaged work groups have

62% fewer accidents, 51% less theft and breakage, 51% lower turnover, and 27% lower absenteeism (Fleming, Rath, & Conchie, 2008).

When employees are engaged, they are connected to the organization. According to Westerlund, engaged employees

> speak positively about the organization to coworkers, potential employees, and customers; have an intense desire to be part of the organization; and exert extra effort, and are dedicated to doing the very best job possible to contribute to the organization's business success. (Westerlund, 2010, p. 35)

Typically, employees do not leave their organizations; they leave their *managers*. Azbill (2008) noted that "Even in situations where employees may have been better off leaving for other job opportunities, they often stayed because 'they loved their managers'" (p. 16). Azbill also shared that when employees are managed in a way that makes them feel valued, the resulting relationship is helpful in increasing engagement. Every day, managers have opportunities to support employees in increasing their value proposition to the organization; passing up those opportunities can decrease it instead. With the cost of turnover, a business should strive to show employees how valued they are by the organization.

Feedback. Managers must also seize opportunities to provide feedback to employees in order to improve on or to maintain the current performance standards. "Experts offer a simple premise. Do a good job of delivering the message and employees feel inspired to enhance their skills and further the goals of the organization" (Adina, 2010, para. 2). Regular performance reviews and consistent discussions about future opportunities are ways that

managers can offer positive reinforcement and constructive criticism to employees, resulting in supportive development of team members. Moustafa (1998) stated, "You need to give precise, evenhanded, honest feedback…to develop confidence in the individual" (p. 23). It is also important to recognize success when it occurs with each employee. Lazalier (2007) wrote, "The aim should be to provide useful feedback to employees and supervisors without pitting employees against each other. Most people want to do a good job and will modify their behavior if given regular feedback" (p. 27). Feedback and survey results provide additional opportunities to incorporate feedback into development plans as a way of engaging employees to make their workplace better (McManus, 2005).

Daily Meetings. A daily meeting, or "huddle," creates an atmosphere that fosters employee engagement. McGregor (1960) in his work on Theory X and Theory Y, asserted that the ability to create solutions to organizational issues is widely distributed throughout the organization and the capacity to solve the issue belongs to the entire organization. Utilizing the whole system to address issues is at the heart of the engagement paradigm. Utilizing time with the whole team and sharing stories about situations observed or experienced encourages employees to learn from each other and work collectively to solve problems (Silverman, 2006). Daily coaching of all employees also sets the tone for the daily performance outcome within the business (Gange & Deci, 2005). Gathering employees together for this coaching supports Van Knippenberg's (2000) findings that if employees strongly identify with the group goals, they are willing to exert effort that enhances the group's performance.

One of the dimensions of employee voice is participative management, which enhances the employee attitude towards work and results in an improvement in job

performance (McCabe & Lewin, 1992). Opening up the decision making process to all employees can add value to the final decision and to the engagement of the employees (Smythe, 2007).

Customer Engagement

"It would be hard to conceive of a more effective mission than one centered on earning and keeping the trust of customers" (Peppers, 2008, p. 221). Fully engaged customers deliver a 23% premium over the average customer in terms of wallet share, profitability, revenue, and relationship growth (Fleming et al., 2005). However, when customers experience a problem, their loyalty to the brand can drop by as much as 66% (Fleming, 2002). Customer engagement is a powerful link to financial performance.

Gallup has identified a customer engagement hierarchy to measure customer engagement and to quantify the strength and nature of a customer's emotional connection to a company. The hierarchy is comprised of four main subjects: confidence (Will the company keep and deliver on its promises?), integrity (Is the customer always treated fairly?), pride (The customer is treated with respect and feels proud to be a customer.), and passion (The customer cannot imagine a world without the business) (Coffman, 2004). Customers are not looking to conduct transactions; customers are looking for relationships. In every company, there are customers who outspend others. These customers visit more often, resist competitive overtures, promote the brand to others, and forgive the occasional service hiccup. Creating customer engagement generates emotional advocates for an organization's brand. Customers who do not just talk about the brand, but who are passionate promoters of the brand, are the best advocates for it.

Because people can transact their business anywhere they want, the focus on building a relationship with customers is key to keeping their business in a specific organization. Customer experience is the reason why consumers shop where they do. Working to establish an emotional connection with a customer creates a customer who is passionate about the company's products and services. Such customers are more likely to share their experiences with others in a passionate way. Just as employees take pride in building relationships with the customers, engaged customers will take pride in sharing information about a business with their friends; the customer becomes a great acquisition tool for additional customers (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990).

When customers offer their feedback to the business, it is important for employees to understand what the customers are saying (Jones & Sasser, 1995). Finding ways for employees to discuss the feedback results is important in keeping customers satisfied. Customers prefer to deal with companies they trust, so to increase the amount of sales to customers, a business needs to focus on the level of trust customers have with the business (Peppers, 2008).

Hewitt Associates (2004) published a study that found employee engagement explained 39% of the variance in total shareholder return. They also found that organizations with higher levels of employee engagement enjoy higher levels of sales growth compared to their peers. Towers Perrin's (2007) study focused on the long-term sustainable impact of employee engagement on key increases in operating income. The study found that companies with low levels of employee engagement experienced a 32% decrease in operating income. Investors and shareholders pay great attention to such shifts in sales growth, shareholder

return, and operating income prior to investing in an organization or moving a large amount

of business to it.

Because employees are human, mistakes can and will happen. If the organization has

earned the trust of a customer, that customer is more likely to remain a customer at the

organization in spite of a mistake (Peppers, 2008). Creating engagement with both employees

and customers is key to opening dialogues and working to fix mistakes while making service

even better. Strong working relationships between employees to help solve problems, strong

relationships between employees and customers to facilitate feedback, and availability of a

forum to discuss all of these elements are important elements in creating and promoting an

engaged environment. In addition, many employees are also customers of the organization.

Customers will do business with an organization tomorrow only if they trust that

organization today; employees will work to earn customer trust only when that employee

trusts their employer (Peppers, 2008). And, because customers talk to each other and talk to

non-customers, a trusting relationship is a vital sales tool. Customers are in a position to sell

the services of an organization or to tell others to stay away from it.

Customer Welcome. In a 1990 study, Martin found that welcoming greetings and

courteous thanks were very important to the customers involved in the study. He stated that

"Each contact can either build or destroy customer satisfaction…each contact or encounter

with a customer represents a pivotal opportunity" (p. 2). Creating customer engagement

involves connecting with the customer, taking interest in what creates meaning for people,

and listening to what the customer is saying. When these actions are taken, customers open

up and share information with the business, and the business can build loyalty via this

relationship between customer and employee. It is only by seeking an understanding of what is important to people that organizations can begin to build engagement (Wheatley, 2006). In Martin's study on the employee–customer interface, he found that consumers expressed "an interest in receiving personalized and courteous service from contact employees who demonstrate a caring attitude" (p. 7).

Scheduling. Making sure that a business has enough employees to meet the needs of the customers is important. Because it is more cost effective to gain additional wallet share with existing customers than it is to acquire new customers, "scheduling the right number and mix of employees to meet forecasted demand is essential to providing good customer service" (Anderson, 2005, p. 58). As engagement of the customer improves, the purchasing relationship between the business and the customer is strengthened.

Summary

With literature highlighting the importance of employee engagement, customer engagement, and Human Sigma, the researcher chose to do this study to further the research by identifying core activities that businesses can utilize to increase engagement. Having read books and articles over the years on engagement, the researcher has always been curious as to basic activities that could be linked together in a model that would offer guidance for new and existing teams in coming together to create dialogue and increase engagement. To date, no such model has been found in the research. The researcher believes that there are key activities and actions that managers and employees can perform that will lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon of engaged teams. Identifying and sharing that theory with

others may guide more teams toward practicing common activities and becoming more engaged.

After reviewing the literature and thinking about her personal management experiences, the researcher theorized that there were eight key activities that a business could utilize to create dialogue and engage both employees and customers. Those activities described in the literature and identified by the researcher as most important were setting clear expectations and holding employees accountable, weekly dialogue to discuss engagement and feedback, recognition, providing immediate feedback to employees, participating in a daily meeting with all employees, creating individual development plans with each employee, welcoming customers as soon as the customer enters the store, and scheduling employees to meet the demands of customer traffic. The researcher also believed that when these eight activities were executed simultaneously, levels of employee engagement and customer engagement would rise above the median, therefore reaching Human Sigma. Return on investment, turnover, and productivity considerations in today's struggling economy emphasize the need for Human Sigma in the workplace.

that comprise the case boundaries. For this research study, the boundaries of the case study was limited to single business unit sites (branches) in the financial industry, located in the upper Midwest, and scoring above the median in Gallup's database for customer and employee management. To be included in the research study, the business unit had to be categorized in one of four size units (as defined by the organization size "small" to "super") and have a minimum of eight employees.

Yin (2009) defines the research design as "a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions" (p. 26). Yin's framework for case study design includes:

1.   A study's questions

2.   Its propositions, if any

3.   Its unit(s) of analysis

4.   The logic linking the data to the proposition

5.   The criteria for interpreting the findings (p. 27).

The first three components assist the researcher in identifying the data to be collected, while the last two components describe what is to be done with data after they have been collected (Yin, 2009).

The first component of this study is the research question: What activities can managers and employees engage in to optimize Human Sigma within financial services organizations?

The second element, the proposition, directs attention to something that should be examined within the scope of the study (Yin, 2009, p. 28). This study's proposition was: Business units optimize Human Sigma by focusing on the activities associated with managing employees, motivating employees, accelerating employee engagement, and engaging customers' emotions.

The third component of Yin's research design focuses on units of analysis. In defining the case, the researcher chose six financial organizations located in the Midwest. To further define the research design, the researcher identified business units that had achieved employee engagement and customer engagement scores above the median. Each case provided an opportunity to complete survey data, review business data, and interview employees to determine whether the information found supported the proposed model. A cross-case analysis compared and further validated the model. Dubin (1978) defined units of analysis to designate the items from which the theory is built. For this study, nine items formed the building blocks of the theory:

1. Clear expectations and employee accountability for outcomes

2. Weekly dialogue to discover meaning and acts of engagement within the business unit

3. Daily team huddle

4. Individual development plans

5. Recognition

6. Immediate feedback

7.   Immediate welcome of customer upon entering the business and follow-up after

      visit

8.   Employee schedules based on customer traffic patterns

9.   Human Sigma

The fourth element, the logic of linking the data to the proposition, lies within the

researcher using the proposition to determine data collected and how the data relates to the

proposed model. The researcher gathered information to ensure that the cases selected were

above median performance levels on employee engagement and customer engagement

metrics. The use of a survey ensured that each participant received the same questions and

the answers given in the survey were equally scored. The researcher defined specific business

data information that was requested in each case to ensure consistency and to minimize the

vast amount of irrelevant data. Semi-structured interviews were used to validate survey

findings and business data in an effort to further clarify the activities within the model and

whether the activities were or were not supported by each case. The cross-case analysis

compared all of the findings from each case to determine support for the proposed model.

The fifth and final element in Yin's framework for case-study design is the criterion

for interpreting the findings. Yin stated, "for case-study analysis, one of the most desirable

techniques is to use a pattern-matching logic" (2009, p. 136). Data were gathered by utilizing

structured interviews, surveys, and the researcher's review of organizational data and

documents. The researcher utilized pattern-matching logic to compare empirically based

patterns with the predicted pattern. If the patterns coincided, the proposition's internal

validity was strengthened; if the patterns did not coincide, the proposition would need to be

questioned (Yin, 2009). More details on interpreting findings will be discussed in the data analysis section.

Theory

As this case study is focused on theory building and testing that theory, the researcher identified Dubin's (1978) work on theory to be an appropriate structure for this case study. Yin's and Dubin's work provided the researcher an opportunity to validate sections of the framework with the proposed study. In his well-recognized work on the elements of theory building, Dubin uses a deductive, theory-then-research strategy. In Dubin's method, theory is developed as a hypothesis based on logic and what is known about the constructs and is then tested and validated with empirical data. Dubin's approach to theory-building research is to make sense of the observable world by identifying a phenomenon's key constructs and determining the relationships among them (Dubin, 1978). According to Lynham (2002), "Following the form and substance of [Dubin's method] is considered necessary and sufficient to ensure both rigor and relevance in the resulting theory" (p. 244).

Dubin's method includes eight steps that progress through and address each of the five phases that Lynham (2002) describes as necessary for theory-building research. The first four of Dubin's eight research steps comprise the first part of the theory-building research process, which entails development of the theoretical model. The steps in this part of the theory-building process include:

1. Units of a Theory: designate the things out of which theories are built. For this study, the units are: set clear expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes, weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit, daily team huddle, individual development plans, recognition, provide immediate feedback, welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit, schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns, and, Human Sigma.

2. Laws of Interaction: describe the relationship between the units of the theory. (Dubin, 1978). There are three types of laws that can be used to describe the interactions and relationships between the theoretical units:

    a. Categoric laws of interaction describe how the values of one unit relate to the value of another unit;

    b. Determinant laws of interaction describe how the value of one unit determines the value of another unit*; and*

    c. Sequential laws of interaction use a time dimension to describe the relationship between two or more units.

   For this study, categoric laws applied, as the value of the units of analysis describe a relationship in which eight units work together to attain Human Sigma.

3. Boundaries: in order for a model to represent an empirical system, it has to have boundaries corresponding to that empirical system. The boundaries for this

study were financial organizations located in the Midwest. In addition, the organizations had employee engagement scores and customer engagement scores above median levels.

4. System States: describes how the theory is expected to operate in the real world and under what conditions the units of the theory will take on characteristic values that persist through time, regardless of the time interval (Dubin, 1978). The characteristics that accurately describe the conditions of the theory are: inclusive, persistent, and distinctive. For this study, the researcher studied business units that had employee engagement and customer engagement scores above median levels for the full year prior to the research occurring.

After completing part one of the theory-building process, the research moves on to part two, research operation. This part of the theory-building research process entails operationalizing and testing the theory. The steps involved in this part of the theory-building research process include:

5. Propositions: a truth statement about a model when the model is fully specified in units, laws of interaction, boundary, and system states.

6. Empirical Indicators: an operation employed by a researcher to secure measurements of values on a unit. The researcher utilized employee testimony by employing Likert-scaled survey questions and then followed up with standardized open-ended interviews in order to collect data from participants.

7. Hypothesis: the feature of a theoretical model closest to the things observable that the theory is trying to model. For this study, a hypothesis is not applicable. Rather, testing of the proposition was conducted.

8. Research: to test the propositions of the theoretical model. The researcher looked for and identified patterns in the responses of the employees in the business units.

Figure 1 provides an illustration of the proposed theory.
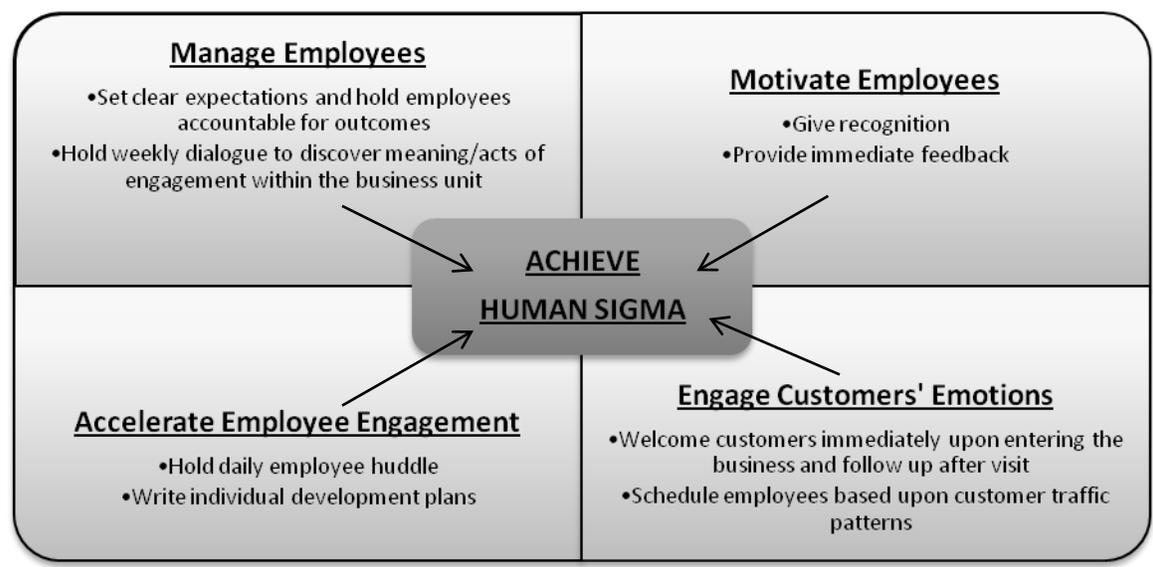
Figure 1. Proposed Theory: Human Sigma Optimization

Because there is a great deal of research about the importance and benefits of employee engagement and customer engagement, but no specific model for creating engagement, the researcher set out to propose such a model. The researcher speculated that there were common activities occurring in businesses that had reached Human Sigma. As

demonstrated in Figure 1, this researcher theorized that, within the four ways of managing

Human Sigma identified by Fleming and Asplund (manage employees, motivate employees,

accelerate employee engagement, and engage customers' emotions), there were eight

activities occurring in businesses that had achieved Human Sigma. Those activities theorized

are as follows:

Manage Employees. Two activities the researcher believed to be important are

setting and holding employees accountable to clear expectations and weekly dialogue to

discuss engagement. When employees know what is expected of them and what others

expect, they can work to meet those standards. Knowing what is expected is a key element to

engagement; when employees know what is expected of them, engagement increases.

Motivate Employees. The researcher believed that recognizing employees and

providing immediate feedback in relation to their work is key to driving engagement.

Management support for overcoming obstacles and recognition for success creates

opportunities to engage employees and build employee excitement about continuing to do

more within their business units (Wagner & Harter, 2006).

Accelerate Employee Engagement. To ensure everyone has a plan to serve the

customer and meet their goals, employees need to huddle in the morning to discuss the day

ahead and what their team strategy will be when both the expected and unexpected occur. To

plan beyond just today, employees should have a development plan so they always know

what they are working towards in the next aspect of their current or future job in the

organization. Two aspects of employee engagement are having the opportunity to learn and

grow in their work and having someone at the workplace who cares about their development (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

Engage Customers' Emotions. Creating a welcoming experience for the customer is an important aspect in engaging the customers' emotions. When customers enter the business, they should feel as comfortable as they would in their own homes. Welcoming customers and having employees available to meet their needs are important aspects of being ready and able to serve any need the customer may have.

Human Sigma. Since Human Sigma is achieved by measuring and managing the human systems in a business, the combination of the eight activities in the model cause an increase in employee engagement and customer engagement. When Human Sigma is achieved, performance is improved and variability in performance is reduced.

Validity

Yin judged the quality of case-study design by three types of validity criteria and one reliability criterion; the case study design needs to meet four conditions: construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005). This design allowed the researcher to further determine the applicability of the case study findings as they relate to the Human Sigma optimization theory.

Construct validity. Construct validity occurs at the data collection and composition phases and typically involves establishing a data chain. Identifying the correct operations measures for the concepts being studied is key to achieving construct validity (Yin, 2009). Construct validity of a positivistic case study can be further strengthened by developing a clear chain of evidence between questions, data, and findings (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005). The

researcher utilized Likert-scaled survey questions and then followed up with standardized open-ended interviews in order to collect data from participants and triangulate and clarify any information from the survey. In addition, the researcher utilized data and documents from the organizations to test the units of analysis. For this study, the researcher assumes the findings by Gallup on financial performance. The financial performance of business units involved in this study is outside the scope of this research.

Internal validity. Internal validity seeks to establish a causal relationship whereby certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships (Yin, 2009). The researcher identified responses of the employees in the business units and analyzed variables including job position, years with the business, employee engagement scores, customer engagement scores, survey responses, business data, and interview responses to test the proposed theory.

External validity. External validity defines the domain to which a study's findings can be generalized (Yin, 2009). In positivistic case studies, the generalization may be done to a broader theory, but not the larger population. Replication of the findings will be necessary before one can have confidence in generalizing the findings. In the event the proposition is confirmed in other studies, one can be more confident in the ability to generalize the findings.

Reliability. Reliability means that the operations of a study can be repeated with the same results (Yin, 2009). The researcher closely followed established protocols in the data-collection process and used structured interview questions and follow-up probes to maintain consistency during interviews.

Data Collection

As case studies allow for the description of the context in which an event or process takes place and the examination and explanation of causal links, case-study research is not limited to a single source of data; case studies can indeed benefit from having multiple sources of evidence. The researcher used multiple sites for the multiple-case study. The goal of the research was not to evaluate the sites themselves but to gain insight into the system as a whole; the researcher not only studied each case, but also analyzed data across the cases. The researcher utilized surveys, business data analysis, and semi-structured interviews and sources of evidence when determining support for the proposed model.

The researcher used Likert-scale questions to collect quantitative data from the participants. Responses were given on a five-point scale as follows: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree or disagree (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). The Likert-scale question responses were followed by a structured, open-ended interview with questions intending to add meaning to the survey responses and to gain clear examples of their experiences. The researcher utilized Patton's (1990) interview guide as a framework for the interviews and supported the researcher in making good decisions about which information to further pursue in the interview. Interviews were not recorded. Notes were handwritten during interviews. In addition, business data and documents were utilized as a measurement of some of the empirical indicators. Prior to the research, the researcher tested the interview guide, questions, and survey with a colleague to check for understanding and clarity before beginning the study.

Case and Participant Selection

Within the selected financial organizations, all business units that had achieved Gallup Q12® and CE11® scores that ranked above the Gallup database median (Human Sigma) were eligible to participate. The researcher worked with corporate contacts to gain information on business units within their organizations that had achieved engagement scores above the Gallup median for the prior year. To randomize the selections for the case study, the researcher put all of the businesses unit names in a hat, drew six names, and contacted the manager of each business unit to gain a commitment to participate in the research. Each of the six business units that were contacted agreed to participate in the study and to share with their employees the intent of the research, asked the employees to participate in a survey, and gave their employees permission to take part in an interview if they so chose. Had a business unit declined to participate, the researcher would have drawn another name and contacted that business unit. Surveys were given to all employees within the business unit, and semi-structured interviews were offered to all of the survey respondents. For a business unit to remain in the study, 50% of the employees had to complete a survey. All six business units had 50% or greater response rates. If a business unit had not met the survey completion requirement, a new business unit would have been selected for the research.

In total, the researcher sent out 79 surveys, and 52 completed surveys were returned to the researcher. Of the 52 surveys returned, 43 individuals expressed interest in an interview with the researcher. Semi-structured interview participants were selected through convenience sampling within the selected business units; employee names were drawn from the completed surveys, and if the employee had not agreed to participate, the researcher continued to draw until the desired number of interviewees was reached. The researcher

conducted interviews with 30 of the employees who expressed interest. Due to scheduling

conflicts, two employees declined an interview, so two other employees were contacted by

the researcher, and both agreed to participate in an interview. All interviews were conducted

between December 2009 and February 2010. Due to scheduling and geographic distance, all

interviews were conducted via telephone. In the event that the researcher had not found at

least four interviewees from a business unit, the researcher would have selected an alternate

business unit to participate in the research. Each of the business units met the minimum

requirement of four participants. Aggregate findings were offered to participants with a

promise to provide a copy of the finished research.

Data Analysis

Each business unit was treated as a single bounded system; the assessment of the data

for each case was conducted individually and documented in an individual case-study report.

The researcher first analyzed each individual case by applying the nine units of analysis to

the survey data and business data collected. Next, the researcher analyzed the responses to

the structured interview questions and follow-up probes to determine if the responses were

consistent with the Likert-scale responses and the business data obtained. The researcher

completed a separate log for each business unit, including the Likert-scale responses to each

of the nine units of analysis and supporting statements used to validate responses.

When the six individual case-study reports were completed, they were used to

conduct a cross-case analysis. Support for each unit of analysis was considered if 80 to 100%

of the participants rated the unit of analysis as "agree" (4) or "strongly agree" (5). Partial

support of the unit of analysis was considered when 50 to 79% of participants rated the unit

of analysis as "agree" or "strongly agree." The unit was considered not supported if fewer

than 50% of participants rated the unit as "agree" or "strongly agree." An important element

in the data analysis was the extent to which the researcher identified and explained

contradictory or disproving evidence. Conducting multiple-case studies provided the

researcher the opportunity to triangulate the data. Triangulation compared data from multiple

sources with a goal of corroborating the same fact or phenomenon (Yin, 2009). The

researcher used the collected data from the surveys, interviews, and document review to

analyze the empirical indicators of the theory. Empirical indicators that were used in testing

the proposition are outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 *Empirical indicators to test the proposition*

Units of Analysis		Empirical Indicator	Source of Data	Result to Support Theory
Manage Employees	Set clear expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes	Employee Testimony	Survey question #1 Statement by interviewees, interview question #2 (Share how you, or your manager, set clear expectations.) and question #3 (How do you, or your manager, hold employees accountable to the expectations that are set?)	80% or greater of responses a 4 or 5 Qualitative data to understand survey results
	Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within	Employee Testimony	Survey question #2 Statement by interviewees, interview question #4 (What does the weekly engagement dialogue sound like?)	80% or greater of responses a 4 or 5 Qualitative data to understand survey results

	the business unit			
Accelerate Employee Engagement	Hold daily employee huddle	Employee Testimony	Survey question #3 Statement by interviewees, interview question #5 (What topics does your team discuss in the daily huddle?) and question #6 (How does the huddle impact engagement?)	80% or greater of responses a 4 or 5 Qualitative data to understand survey results
	Write individual development plans	Documented Employee Development Plans	Business data Statement by interviewees, interview question #7 (How has your individual development plan contributed to your level of engagement?)	Yes Qualitative data to understand survey results
Motivate Employees	Give recognition	Employee Testimony	Survey question #4 Statement by interviewees, interview question #8 (How does your work group utilize recognition as a form of motivation?)	80% or greater of responses a 4 or 5 Qualitative data to understand survey results
	Provide immediate feedback	Employee Testimony	Survey question #5 Statement by interviewees, interview question #9 (When you receive coaching in-the-moment feedback, how does that engage you?)	80% or greater of responses a 4 or 5 Qualitative data to understand survey results
Engage	Welcome customer immediately upon	Customer Survey Data (as collected	Business data	80% or greater of responses a 4 or 5

Customers' Emotions	entering the business and follow up after visit	by the organization through organizational surveys)	Statement by interviewees, interview question #10 (when welcoming and following up with your customers, how do you know they are engaged?)	Qualitative data to understand survey results
	Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns	Documented business schedules as compared to documented customer transactions	Business data Statement by interviewees, interview question #11 (How does the work schedule of the business unit engage the customers?)	Yes Qualitative data to understand survey results
Human Sigma	Customer Engagement and Employee Engagement Surveys	Documented survey data (as collected by the organization through organizational surveys)	Business data	Yes

Case Study Database

A case-study database was maintained as a way to organize and document the data collected. The researcher's notes, business data, and survey data were stored in an Excel database in a manner that made it convenient for the researcher to retrieve. All hard copies (documents and handwritten notes) were kept in a file so the researcher could review the original data. All information gathered as part of the research was included in the database to ensure that all information was available in determining the findings of the research.

Ethics and Protection of Research Participants

        Participants were given a consent form prior to the interview and survey administration which included background information describing the study, an explanation of the procedures in which the participants would engage, identification of any risks and benefits of the study, steps taken to ensure confidentiality, assurances as to the voluntary nature of the study, and contact information for the researcher in the event the participant had any future questions. Interviews were documented by the researcher in handwritten notes. After being transferred to the case-study database, all surveys, interview notes, and business unit data and documents were kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office until the conclusion of the research. The Excel database was password protected, and the computer utilized was stored in a secure, locked office. In no manner do the research findings disclose the actual names of the participating organizations, business units, or the employees. The organizations are only described in general terms, and when referencing individuals the researcher used a number in place of a name for all participants. All participant names, along with demographic information, were kept separate from the data. At the conclusion of the research, all collected data was shredded, erased, and otherwise destroyed.

Chapter 4

Findings

This positivistic multiple-case study tested the researcher's theory that a combination of nine factors are utilized in organizations that have reached Human Sigma. These nine factors are: 1. Set clear expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes; 2. Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit; 3. Hold daily team huddle; 4. Write individual development plans; 5. Give recognition; 6. Provide immediate feedback; 7. Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit; 8. Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns; 9. Human Sigma.

Findings are presented first by case in reference to each of the nine units of the theory, followed by the cross-case analysis. The findings identify which of the nine units are fully, partially, or not supported by the researcher's theory.

The researcher completed charts that outlined the responses of each participant by case and captured supporting statements from each participant with regard to each of the eight units.

Table 4.1 *Likert scale survey questions and business documentation*

Units of Analysis		Likert-scale Questions
Manage	Set clear expectations	My manager sets clear expectations and holds me accountable for the outcome (where 1 is strongly

Employees	and hold employees accountable for outcomes	disagree and 5 is strongly agree).
	Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit	Our work group discusses Q12 and CE11 weekly at a minimum (where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree).
Accelerate Employee Engagement	Hold daily employee huddle	My work group has a daily huddle (where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree).
	Write individual development plans	[Business data: individual development plans in place reviewed by the researcher.]
Motivate Employees	Give recognition	I receive an appropriate amount of recognition (where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree).

	Provide immediate feedback	I receive immediate feedback (where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree).
Engage Customers' Emotions	Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit	[Business data: customer survey scores reviewed by the researcher .]
	Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns	[Business data: customer survey scores reviewed by the researcher.]
Human Sigma	Customer Engagement and Employee Engagement Surveys	[Business data: employee engagement and customer engagement scores reviewed by the researcher to determine if the scores are above the median scores in the organization.]

Participants

All 52 participants met the predetermined criteria of working for a financial organization in the Midwest that had both employee engagement and customer engagement scores above median levels. Each employee is either an individual contributor or a manager within the organization and has direct contact with other employees and with customers in their job.

Demographics

Six different financial organizations participated in the study. Basic participant demographics are described in Table 4.2. There were 21 female and 9 male interview participants in the study. Six of the participants were managers and 24 were individual contributors. Nine had between one and five years of experience with their organization, 11 had between 6 and 10 years of experience with their organization, seven had between 11 and 15 years of experience with their organization, one had between 16 and 20 years of experiences with the organization, and two had between 21 and 25 years of experience with their organization.

Table 4.2 *Participant Demographics*

	Male/Female	Individual Contributor/Manager	Years with Organization
CASE 1			
Participant 102	F	IC	14

Participant 115	F	IC	22
Participant 121	F	IC	7
Participant 130	F	MGR	9
CASE 2			
Participant 103	M	IC	4
Participant 111	F	MGR	6
Participant 126	M	IC	3
Participant 129	M	IC	11
CASE 3			
Participant 105	F	IC	2
Participant 107	F	IC	12
Participant 114	F	MGR	9
Participant 117	F	IC	10
Participant 120	F	IC	3
Participant 128	M	IC	5
CASE 4			

Participant 101	F	IC	6
Participant 113	F	IC	10
Participant 116	F	IC	16
Participant 119	F	IC	3
Participant 124	M	MGR	4
CASE 5			
Participant 109	M	IC	13
Participant 122	F	IC	4
Participant 123	F	IC	17
Participant 127	F	MGR	24
CASE 6			
Participant 104	F	IC	8
Participant 106	F	IC	14
Participant 108	F	IC	9
Participant 110	M	IC	6
Participant 112	F	IC	8

Participant 118	M	IC	12
Participant 125	M	MGR	4
TOTALS	21 Female 70%	6 MGR 20%	1-5 years (9) 30%
	9 Male 30%	24 IC 80%	6-10 years (11) 37%
			11-15 years (7) 23%
			16-20 years (1) 3%
			21-25 years (2) 7%

Case Analysis

The following case-by-case findings demonstrate support for the units of analysis in the researcher's theory in each case. The unit was supported if 80 to 100% of participants rated the unit a four or five, partially supported if 50 to 80% rated the unit as a four or five, and did not support if fewer than 50% rated the unit as a four or five.

Case 1

Case 1 is a financial organization in the Midwest that consists of 10 employees. The organization offers many financial products to their customers while specializing in investment portfolio management. Six employees returned completed surveys, and four of those employees participated in an interview with the researcher. Of the four interviewed, three employees were individual contributors and one was a manager. All four employees were female and ranged in experience from 7 to 22 years of employment with the business.

Units of analysis.

Unit 1: Set expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes. Five of the six survey respondents rated survey question 1 (My manager sets clear expectations and holds me accountable for the outcome.) with a 4 or 5, while one survey respondent rated the question a 3. These participants were very clear that they each had goals in place to meet the goals of the larger organization. They may be successful as individuals, but the real success is when everyone in the organization is successful and they win as a team. The participants expressed in the interviews that the organization's goal and the tools or support needed to meet or exceed the goal were important to them. The following quoted responses to the second interview question linked to this unit of analysis (Share how you, or your manager, hold employees accountable to the expectations that are set.) highlight the support for this question:

> Participant 102: We have clear goals, like everyone else across the company, and my manager and I meet to talk about how I will achieve them [the goals] and what support or training I need to meet the goals.

Participant 115: I have minimum expectations that I need to meet to stay in my role; my manager and I talk about what activities are working and what I may need to change to meet my goals.

When asked the third interview question (How do you, or your manager hold employees accountable to the expectations set?) participants shared:

Participant 102: My manager provides updates to me daily and weekly so I can track my progress, and if I fall behind we talk about ways to get back on track.

Participant 121: We meet weekly to look at my progress to the goals and talk about what activities are leading to my success and where I may be behind. If I am behind, my manager spends extra time with me to help me succeed.

One survey respondent rated survey question number 1 as a 3; however, when probed in the interviews for further information on what could have led to a lower response, the participant shared, "I am not sure, for me this is an important element and without it I would not know what was expected of me at work and that would not be good." With the survey responses and interview responses, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 2: Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit. All six of the survey respondents rated survey question 2 (Our workgroup discusses Q12 and CE11 weekly, at a minimum.) with a 4 or 5. Those interviewed stated that

they focus on and value the feedback provided by their customers and their team members.

As soon as a new customer survey is received at the business, the employees share the survey

results with each other and talk about what they are doing that will help create engagement

and actions that may be taking away from engagement in the store. When asked what the

weekly engagement dialogue sounded like (interview question #4), interview participants

shared:

> Participant 121: During our huddle, we talk about a question on the surveys and share
> what we are doing to positively impact the results of that question. We also share
> what the question means to us and give examples of how we are personally impacting
> the outcomes.

> Participant 102: We take time in our huddle to share customer service scores and talk
> about what the customer feedback means to us and what we can do to continue to
> improve our customer relationships.

The employee responses to the survey and the interview questions fully supported this

unit of analysis.

Unit 3: Hold daily team huddle. Five of the six survey respondents rated survey

question 3 (My workgroup has a daily huddle.) with a 4 or 5, while one survey respondent

rated the question a 3. Each interviewed person talked about topics that consistently come up

in huddles and how the topics are covered every day. There were two interview questions

utilized to determine support for this unit of analysis. The first question was "What topics does your team discuss in the daily huddle?" (interview question 5) and responses included:

Participant 102: We talk about success and opportunities from the prior day, share commitments for today, and make sure we know who is in and out for the day so our staffing is adequate.

Participant 115: Every day we start with recognition and sharing success from the prior day. Then our manager provides an update about how we are doing against our goals, and then we talk about what today look like—goals, staffing, busy times, lunches—and then we open the doors for our customers.

The second question was "How does the huddle impact engagement?" (interview question 6), and the following information was shared:

Participant 121: I enjoy starting the day with my other team members…it gives us a chance to get on the same page and make sure everyone is OK and ready to start the day. I think that because of the huddle, everyone has a chance to start the day more engaged.

Participant 115: The daily huddle in the morning clears my head and gets me focused on work. It is easy to let things from home affect my mood – the huddle gives me the

time to focus and put other thoughts on the back burner while I am at work for the day.

One survey respondent rated this question a 3. When the researcher asked the interview participants what may have led to this rating, one participant shared:

We have one person who is not a morning person, so my guess is that although I feel the huddle is important and wakes everyone up, they may see it as an activity that they are not in love with doing so early in the morning.

It is the one time during the day when the whole team can be together before the business opens. After these meetings, everyone walks away feeling stronger about the expectations of the day and how everyone in the business is going to support each other and serve the customers. The survey responses and interview responses for the organization as a whole supported this unit of analysis.

Unit 4: Write individual development plans. The researcher gained access to development plans for the employees within this organization. As a result, the researcher found that each employee had an active development plan in place and noticed that there were goals and timelines for the activities listed within the plan. During the interview, question number 7 (How has your individual development plan contributed to your level of engagement?) was asked to further the findings for this fourth unit of analysis. Interview participants shared:

Participant 102: I know what my goals are, and that keeps me focused on what I am hoping to achieve for my customers and myself.

Participant 121: I am not looking to advance in my career, but I am looking to maintain my current position and be one of the highest performers in my job category. My plan keeps me current on my progress to goals and keeps my manager just as interested in keeping a high performer in my position.

For this organization, the development plan was an important factor in making employees feel that there was a focus on further developing themselves, their fellow employees, and their customers. Employee engagement is positively impacted in this group of participants in great part because they have time with their manager to define a plan. When there is a plan, the participants believe that they have an opportunity to do their best work in their careers with the organization. The business data and interview responses showed support for this unit of analysis.

Unit 5: Give recognition. All six of the survey respondents rated survey question 4 (I receive an appropriate amount of recognition.) with a 4 or 5. When asked during the interviews, "How does your workgroup utilize recognition as a form of motivation?" (interview question #8), participants shared:

Participant 121: We watch for everyone to do things outside of the normal, and when I see it, I let them know. It is fun to be recognized and it is just as fun to make someone else smile…it definitely motivates me to always stay in the positive.

Participant 102: We recognize to show we care about each other. It is motivating to

know that my team cares enough about me to verbalize and show it!

Recognition in this organization occurs because the manager has established a standard that

recognition is important. Starting the daily huddle with recognition starts the day on a

positive note, and the employees stated that they look for opportunities during the day to

continue to recognize each other. Participant responses showed support for this unit of

analysis.

Unit 6: Provide immediate feedback. Five of the six survey respondents rated survey

question 5 (I receive immediate feedback.) with a 4 or 5, while one survey respondent rated

the question a 3. Interview question number 9 (When you receive immediate feedback, how

does that engage you?) found great support for the importance of feedback:

Participant 102: It is fantastic to know that my peers and manager are all trying to

help me be as successful as possible. That feedback always reminds me we are one

team and are only as successful as everyone else on the team is.

Participant 115: It [immediate feedback] keeps me focused on the customer and doing

my job. It is sometimes easy to not remember that of the hundreds of customers I see,

it is the first time for each customer seeing me. Coaching in the moment reminds me

that each customer needs to be treated as a new situation versus a situation that I have

seen a hundred times before and that [feedback] helps me provide the best service.

One survey response was a 3 for this item. During the interviews one participant shared that a reason for this may have been,

> I want more feedback. When we get busy, I find I don't receive as much feedback at the time and get it all when we slow down again. It would be great to figure out a way to get the feedback right away even when we are busy.

In this organization, each employee has an expectation of feedback for and from each of his or her peers and their manager. The interview participants expressed that they were comfortable giving and receiving feedback. It was shared that participants believe that the feedback is meant to help one another feel recognized and to make a positive difference in achieving the goals established. Combining the survey and interview responses, this unit of analysis was supported by the findings.

Unit 7: Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit. When utilizing the business data to determine whether there was or was not support for this unit of analysis, the researcher found that, within the customer survey data, 80% of the customers surveyed rated this unit of analysis a 5. To identify further information on this unit, the interview participants were asked, "When welcoming and following up with your customers, how do you know they are engaged?" (interview question #10). Participants shared:

> Participant 130: As a manager, I receive comments from customers about how the team members listened to them, identified alternative ways to do things, and that the

team member keeps their promises. When a customer has a specific example to share

with me, I know they are engaged.

Participant 121: They [customers] listen to me and ask questions, which means they

are paying attention and trusting me to help them be successful.

The tone of the participants' voices for this question was energized. It was clear from their

comments that they believe the real reason for much of their success is due, in great part, to

the relationships they have built with their customers. These employees have an almost

familial relationship with their customers and have a stake in their success. When employees

create this type of environment for their customers, the engagement of the customers

improves. This unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 8: Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns. To determine

whether this unit of analysis did or did not have support, the researcher gained access to the

business schedule. The researcher found that this organization adjusts its staffing levels to

match the peak times of customer traffic in the store. Due to this, lunches are often taken

later than normal (outside the hours of 11-2) in order to meet with customers, and employees

sometimes stay after hours to meet with customers who cannot make it to the business during

normal hours. All of this is done to make sure that the organization is able to meet the needs

of the customers. As one participant stated in response to interview question number 11

(How does the work schedule of the business unit engage the customer?), this affects

customer engagement:

Participant 102: When we are available so the customer does not have to wait for help, the customer is immediately engaged in conversation and feels valued. If they have to wait, they have an opportunity to become dissatisfied.

Participant 130: We need to be staffed to meet the demand of the customer, and that varies daily. We do our best to adjust schedules to meet the traffic forecasted. When we do this well, the business runs smooth. When we are understaffed, everyone has to stop what they are doing to go out and meet customers regardless of what their position [job title]   is. If we don't, our service scores are negatively impacted, which goes directly to the engagement level of the customer.

According to the business data and interview responses, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 9: Human Sigma. This business has employee engagement scores of 4.5 on a 5-point scale and customer engagement scores of 4.16 on a 5-point scale; both are above the median for the organization. With both employee engagement and customer engagement scores falling above the median, this business has reached Human Sigma and supported this unit of analysis.

Summary. Table 4.3 for Case 1 summarizes responses to the survey questions and business documentation.

Table 4.3 *Case 1 responses to survey and business documentation*

Units of Analysis		Response of 4 or 5	Other Responses	Total Responses	% of 4 or 5 Responses	Support/Partially Support/Not Support
Manage Employees	Set clear expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes	5	1 (3)	6	83%	Support
	Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit	6		6	100%	Support
Accelerate Employee Engagement	Hold daily employee huddle	5	1 (3)	6	83%	Support
	Write individual development plans	Y	The researcher gained access to development plans for the employees and identified that each employee had an active development plan.			Support
Motivate	Give	6		6	100%	Support

Employees	recognition					
	Provide immediate feedback	5	1 (3)	6	83%	Support
Engage Customers' Emotions	Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit	Y	The researcher looked at the customer engagement survey data and found that customers felt welcomed (rating it a 5, with 5 being "strongly agree") 86% of the time.			Support
	Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns	Y	The researcher looked at the schedules of the organization. All schedules were created two weeks in advance and had employees scheduled during lunchtime and fully scheduled until closing time.			Support
Human Sigma	Customer Engagement and Employee Engagement Survey Scores	Y	The researcher looked at the customer engagement and employee engagement scores for the business unit and determined that both were above the median levels.			Support

This business unit had great synergy. Each of the employees who participated in an interview was very excited about the conversation, was eager to share examples, and gave recognition to co-workers. From the examples shared by the employees, it was clear to the researcher that the communication going on in this organization was consistent, open, and honest. During the individual interviews, the participants gave examples of how they valued the feedback and opinions of the other employees in their work group and had a great deal of comfort and compassion for one another. During the interview one participant stated, "this is an interesting way to look at Human Sigma, I haven't thought about how the key activities really are core to driving our engagement… I can't wait to talk about this during our next huddle and see what everyone else thinks." Each of the nine units of analysis were supported by the responses given on the surveys, through the business data, and in the interviews conducted by the researcher.

Case 2

Case 2 is a financial organization in the Midwest with eight employees. The organization offers multiple financial products and specializes in customers who have had credit difficulties in the past or who have a higher debt-to-income ratio. The goal of the business is to support customers in rebuilding their credit while lowering their total debt. Five employees returned completed surveys, and four of those employees participated in an interview with the researcher. Of the four interviewed, three employees were individual contributors and one employee was a manager. Three employees were male and one employee was female. Those interviewed ranged in experience from 3 to 11 years of employment with the business.

Units of Analysis.

Unit 1: Set expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes. All survey respondents rated survey question 1 (My manager sets clear expectations and holds me accountable for the outcome.) with a 4 or 5 response. The manager of this organization has worked to have his employees share with one another how each of them are doing in relation to their individual and group goals and at what points they want and need support from each other. Employees meet with their manager to discuss their progress against individual and organizational goals, and the manager is consistent in setting goals and supporting employees in their efforts to achieve the goals. When asked the second interview question linked to this unit of analysis (Share how you, or your manager, hold employees accountable to the expectations that are set.), respondents indicated support for this question:

> Participant 126: I am pretty new to my role, so my manager meets with me more often than my peers. We talk about how I get credit for certain activities and where that puts me in relation to my goals. As I learn more and have more time in the business, I am sure these meetings will change a bit, but I appreciate my manager's support as I learn my new job.

> Participant 103: I have daily goals that I need to meet in order to meet my monthly and quarterly goals. My manager and I meet to talk about my progress and opportunities to keep me on pace.

When asked the third interview question (How do you, or your manager, hold employees accountable to the expectations set?), participants shared:

Participant 126: Based upon our weekly meetings, everyone knows the goals set and we all work towards them. It isn't fun when you have to tell your team that you didn't meet your goals—talk about accountability!

Participant 129: My manager puts it on my shoulders to share with my team how I am doing in relation to my goals. I don't want to let my team or myself down; this keeps me focused and always trying to do my best for my customers.

With the survey responses and interview responses, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 2: Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit. All five of the survey respondents rated survey question 2 (Our workgroup discusses Q12 and CE11 weekly, at a minimum.) with a 4 or 5. The organization has broken team members into task teams based on job title. Each task team meets weekly to talk about what the survey questions and results mean, what activities they can engage everyone in to positively affect the engagement results, and how they can foster communication about engagement with the larger team. When asked what the weekly engagement dialogue sounded like (interview question #4), interview participants shared:

Participant 126: We talk about engagement more often than weekly, but weekly we spend more time checking in on our question-task teams and looking for trends in the customer feedback we have received. When we find an opportunity, we share it with the whole team and talk about what we can do differently.

Participant 103: We have focused task teams within our groups, specifically around

each job title. We meet weekly and discuss Q12 and CE11 and then report back to the

larger team on what we identify as our upcoming focus and commitment as a team to

increase engagement.

Based upon the survey responses and interview responses, this unit of analysis was

supported.

Unit 3: Hold daily team huddle. All of the survey respondents rated survey question

3 (My workgroup has a daily huddle.) with a 4 or 5. Two interview questions were used to

determine support for this unit of analysis. The first question was "What topics does your

team discuss in the daily huddle?" (interview question 5), and response highlights included:

Participant 126: No topic is off limits in the huddle if it involves something that

affects the team or our customers. Typically, we talk about our results against the

goals, customer surveys, and staffing for the day. We also celebrate birthdays or

anniversaries and special days in our community.

Participant 129: Usually we start the huddle with any recognition or key success from

the prior day. Then we talk about our goals and how we performed against them and

what our day looks like today along with our commitments to the goals.

Participant 129: On the rare occasion where we haven't had a huddle, the team is not as organized in our work together. The huddle sets our priorities and gets us on the same page.

The second question asked was "How does the huddle impact engagement?" (interview question 6), and the following information was shared:

Participant 111: As a manager, I believe that by teaming together with good, solid activities each day, we are working to ensure every voice is heard and that we have a clear understanding of what is expected of us at work. The best part is that we share a lot of laughs and have fun together as a team along the way.

This team consistently shares recognition and results in the daily huddle as a way of creating a strong plan for their success during the day. In addition, two participants talked about the negative impact of missing a huddle on the team's organization and cooperation for the day, which has a negative impact on individual daily success as well. The survey responses and interview responses supported this unit of analysis.

Unit 4: Write individual development plans. The researcher gained access to development plans for the employees within this organization. As a result, the researcher found that employees leverage their development plan as a way to further develop their skills in their current role and to determine what additional skills they need to develop to be prepared for the next role. During the interview, question number 7 (How has your individual development plan contributed to your level of engagement?) was asked to further the findings for this fourth unit of analysis. Interview participants shared:

Participant 103: In my monthly one-on-ones with my manager, we talk about progress to my development plan and it gives me an opportunity to ask questions and continue to be excited about my future growth and development.

Participant 126: I use my plan to promote consistency in my performance, and I use the time with my manager to continue to further what I am doing in my current role. It is great to know that there are many opportunities for me as I work to advance in my career.

The business data and interview responses showed support for this unit of analysis.

Unit 5: Give recognition. Three of the survey respondents rated this question a 4 or 5, while two survey respondents rated this question a 3. When asked during the interviews, "How does your workgroup utilize recognition as a form of motivation" (interview question #8), participants shared:

Participant 103: We have a lot of fun, and we use recognition as a way of showing each other we care about each other and notice the efforts that everyone is making. I have an opportunity to do more of this. It can be a "great job" or a cup of coffee; the important thing is we all take the time to notice.

Participant 126: Our daily huddle is a great forum for me to share recognition to others to make sure the whole team knows. I make it a point to recognize when I see it. I also make it a point to share it with the larger team in the huddle so everyone knows and can give kudos as well.

There were two survey responses of 3 on this question, and when the researcher asked about this during interviews it was shared that the employees wanted even more recognition.

Participant 111: I have an opportunity as the manager to do more of this. My team is so engaged that I sometimes think I don't have to be as vocal with my recognition. These responses tell me that I need to step up my recognition efforts and not rely upon the team to do so much of it. This is too important for me to not focus on.

The recognition unit was partially supported by this group. The group recognized that it had an opportunity to increase the amount of recognition given to one another.

Unit 6: Provide immediate feedback. All five of the survey respondents rated survey question 5 (I received immediate feedback.) with a 4 or 5. Interview question number 9 (When you receive immediate feedback, how does that engage you?) found:

Participant 103: It reminds me that I am running a marathon and not a sprint. Every time a customer is in front of me it is a new opportunity, and the feedback keeps me focused on never forgetting that it is the customer's first time for this question or transaction regardless of how many customers I have already helped that day. Receiving the feedback right away gives me the opportunity to change my service before I negatively impact additional customers.

Participant 129: The feedback is like a little pep rally for me. It reminds me that I am in control of every interaction and I have the power to make it positive or negative.

The coaching is like refueling for me, and it reminds me that I have an important part in helping the customers that I talk to every day.

The participants stressed the importance of giving and receiving feedback right away, while the interaction with the customer was still fresh in their mind. The benefit they attributed to immediate feedback was that the behavior could then be replicated (if the behavior was positive) or modified (if the behavior needed improvement) so that there would be positive impact to the employee and the customer. The feedback was welcomed from anyone (manager, employee, or customer) who had a genuine interest and was specific to the demonstrated behavior and the impact of the behavior on performance. Both the survey responses and interview responses supported this unit of analysis.

Unit 7: Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit. When examining the business data to determine whether there was or was not support for this unit of analysis, the researcher found that, within the customer survey data, 81% of the customers surveyed rated this unit of analysis a 5. To identify further information on this unit, the interview participants were asked, "When welcoming and following up with your customers, how do you know they are engaged?" (interview question #10). Participants shared:

Participant 103: The customers that are most engaged always have a story to tell or a question to ask me. If they come in and aren't smiling and talking, I know that I have an opportunity to find out what is going on with them and get them to leave feeling like I cared enough to ask about their day.

Participant 126: They look up when they come in, and they look around the whole

store to see what is going on; they are confident in their questions and in the

interactions they have, and that tells me they are engaged and satisfied with their

relationship with us.

This organization felt strongly that they could determine a customer's engagement by

how they came into the business. The sooner the employee was able to welcome the

customer into the store, the sooner that employee could make a positive difference for the

customer. This unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 8: Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns. To determine

whether this unit of analysis did or did not have support, the researcher gained access to the

business schedule. The researcher found that this organization works hard to have the

employees available when the customers arrive. Participants mentioned many customers like

to come into the store over the lunch hour. The employees take late or early lunches to ensure

that all employees are in the store during the lunch hour. They believe, and relate back to

their customer engagement scores, that their customers realize and appreciate this effort, and

employee availability increases the engagement of their customers. As highlighted below, in

selected responses to interview question number 11 (How does the work schedule of the

business unit engage the customer?), employees understand the importance of meeting the

scheduling needs of the customers:

Participant 103: Our schedule is built around times of the day when we are typically

more busy, and that helps us so our customers don't have to wait too long to see us.

We are excited to help them, and all of us work to be available so they don't have to

spend time waiting for us. For example, we have lots of customers who come in over

their lunch. This means that many of us go to lunch earlier or later so that we are

available over the lunch hour for our customers.

Participant 129: If you have ever had to wait on people who have had to wait, the first

thing they tell you about is how busy you are. I would rather talk about something

else, so I work really hard to make sure that if there is a customer waiting that I give

them eye contact and tell them "hello" so they feel welcomed and are less concerned

about the wait when it is their turn.

As shown by the business data and interview responses, this unit of analysis was

supported.

Unit 9: Human Sigma. This business has employee engagement scores of 4.31 on a

5-point scale and customer engagement scores of 4.04 on a 5-point scale, both above the

median for the organization. With both employee engagement and customer engagement

scores above the median, the business has reached Human Sigma and supports this unit of

analysis.

Summary. Table 4.4 for Case 2 summarizes responses to the survey questions and

business documentation.

Table 4.4 *Case 2 responses to survey and business documentation*

Units of Analysis	Response	Other	Total	% of 4 or 5	Support/Partially/Not

Employees	recognition					
	Provide immediate feedback	5		5	100%	Support
Engage Customers' Emotions	Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit	Y	The researcher looked at the customer engagement survey data and found that customers felt welcomed (rating it a 5, with 5 being "strongly agree") 81% of the time.			Support
	Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns	Y	The researcher looked at the schedules of the organization. All schedules were created three weeks in advance and varied in number of employees scheduled based on customer patronage times.			Support
Human Sigma	Customer Engagement and Employee Engagement Survey Scores	Y	The researcher looked at the customer engagement and employee engagement scores for the business unit and determined that both were above the median levels.			Support

Interview participants from this organization were very factual and specific when giving responses during the interview. All made comments at times about how engagement is up to them as individuals. To be successful, each individual would need to positively impact the relationships they have with their customers and with their fellow employees. This work group gave examples of how coaching and development plans are tailored to the development level of each individual employee. The impact of the team sharing their goals and progress to goals with each other, and of working on task teams to discuss engagement highlights, is that the manager does not need to be the sole person driving engagement. By creating opportunities for the team to discuss and develop engagement, the manager is also developing the team members' skills in working as a group and facilitating dialogue to create positive change. Eight of the nine units were supported by the responses given on the surveys and the business data reviewed by the researcher and were further validated in the interviews conducted by the researcher. One unit, recognition, was partially supported in this case.

Case 3

Case 3 is a financial organization in the Midwest with 15 employees. The organization offers multiple financial products and specializes in customers who are looking to utilize current equity to finance other purchases. Eleven employees returned completed surveys, and six of those employees participated in an interview with the researcher. Of the six interviewed, five employees were individual contributors and one was a manager. Five employees were female and one was male. Experience ranged from 2 to 12 years of employment with the business.

Units of analysis.

Unit 1: Set expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes. All survey respondents rated survey question 1 (My manager sets clear expectations and holds me accountable for the outcome.) with a 4 or 5. When asked the second interview question linked to this unit of analysis (Share how you, or your manager, hold employees accountable to the expectations that are set.), interviewees gave the following quotes indicating support for this question:

Participant 114: As a manager, I sit down with all of my team members when they are new to share with them the expectations that have been set for all of us. We have follow-up meetings monthly where we look at trends and progress, and we meet daily and weekly to do everything we can to set ourselves up for success.

Participant 105: The expectation is shared with me and I have a chance to ask questions to make sure that I understand. Then we [my manager and I] determine a plan to meet the expectations, and my manager frequently checks in with me to lend support as I work to meet the goals.

When asked the third interview question (How do you, or your manager, hold employees accountable to the expectations set?), participants shared:

Participant 107: When we have a new expectation that we have a say in, I ask the team what is working and what we can do differently as I provide progress updates. If

the expectation is something that we just have to do, I remind them of the expectation and remind them of the importance of the expectation and ask for their ideas on what we can do to meet the expectation.

Participant 117: We share progress toward the expectations in our daily huddle and in our individuals one-on-ones with our manager. This keeps the goal top of mind and helps the goal become part of my daily routine.

The manager of this team meets individually with each employee to go through the expectations and to give the individual employee the opportunity to ask clarifying questions and discuss activity plans and targets to meet or exceed the established expectations. Those interviewed shared the importance of ongoing and consistent feedback from their manager to stay on track with meeting their goals. Within the survey responses and the interview responses, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 2: Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit. Each of the 11 survey respondents rated survey question 2 (Our workgroup discusses Q12 and CE11 weekly, at a minimum.) with a 4 or 5. When asked what the weekly engagement dialogue sounded like (interview question #4), interview participants shared:

Participant 105: We pick one Q12 question and one CE11 question to focus on every month. Each Wednesday, our huddle is about those questions, and we all share examples of what the question means to each of us and where we have seen others on the team display these actions. These conversations really help me stay centered on the customer as my main focus.

Participant 117: Each week we talk about our question of the month and we all bring

an example to the huddle of where we either did something that relates to the question

or we noticed someone on the team doing something that relates to the question.

During interviews, a key theme was the benefit of picking one employee engagement question and one customer engagement question each month around which to create a dialogue. This practice insured that the team spent time really digging into the meaning of the questions to each individual employee and gave everyone else the chance to hear what is important to their peers and to determine how all of them can work together to create an engaged environment. By the end of the year, the employees will have spent time discussing each one of the questions in depth. According to the survey responses and the interviews, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 3: Hold daily team huddle. Ten survey respondents rated survey question 3 (My workgroup has a daily huddle.) with a 4 or 5. One survey respondent rated this question a 3. Two interview questions were utilized to determine support for this unit of analysis. The first question was "What topics does your team discuss in the daily huddle?" (interview question 5), and response highlights were:

Participant 128: We talk about any headlines in the news that may impact our

customers. We also discuss our results to our goals, who is out for the day as it relates

to our schedule, and we share success stories from the day before and talk about any customer surveys that came in.

Participant 117: We start with recognition about people or things that worked well the day before. My manager talks about our results compared to our goals, and we make sure everyone knows the lunch schedule and anyone who may be out for the day (or part of the day). We end with a cheer and are ready to start the day.

Participant 128: I am not here for the huddle before the store opens, so when I come in my manager and I touch base to talk about what came up in the huddle. It helps me feel like I was a part of the huddle even though I am not there that early.

The second question asked was "How does the huddle impact engagement?" (interview question 6), and the following information was shared:

Participant 105: It helps me to get focused for the day, and that is a positive when it comes to me being engaged!

Participant 120: It is the one time during the day where the whole group is together and we can ask each other questions or share information. It is nice to have this opportunity in the morning, and I look forward to it as it gets the team on the same play for the day.

One survey respondent rated this question a 3. When the researcher probed deeper during the interviews, one participant shared,

> I am rarely here early enough for the huddle due to my schedule. I wish I was here, as I always hear from the team what a great way to start the day…it would be great to be here even just once a week to take part with the whole team instead of being caught up when I arrive. I should ask my manager if that is an option.

During the interviews, it was clear that the huddle takes place every day and has a consistent format. The interviews also highlighted that those employees whose shifts start later in the day have time with their manager or another team member to get a recap of the huddle and ensure that everyone working in the store knows what the day's plan for success is. Taking the surveys and interview responses of the business into consideration, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 4: Write individual development plans. The researcher gained access to development plans for the employees within this organization. As a result, the researcher found that each employee had clear goals and priorities in their development plans. During the interview, question number 7 (How has your individual development plan contributed to your level of engagement?) was asked to further the findings for this fourth unit of analysis. Interview participants shared:

> Participant 107: I love it and look forward to the conversations with my manager. I want to be promoted in the next six months, and I am confident because of my plan that it a realistic goal.

Participant 114: My goal, as a manager, is to make sure that my team members all

have a plan and all have realistic goals and feedback to meet the goals. I feel good

when I can share additional insight with my team, and I feel even better when

someone from my team is promoted to the next level, even if that means they have to

leave my business unit for the opportunity.

The employees were excited to have the opportunity to talk about their development

plans. Each of them expressed enjoyment in using their plans to identify key activities and

talked about how fortunate they were to work for a manager and a company that valued them

enough to give them time and resources to further develop themselves. The business data and

interview responses showed support for this unit of analysis.

Unit 5: Give recognition. Each of the survey respondents rated this question a 4 or

5". When asked during the interviews, "How does your workgroup utilize recognition as a

form of motivation?" (interview question #8), participants shared:

Participant 107: I enjoy it when someone notices that I have done a good job, and it

motivates me to do more. The same is true when I recognize others, and when all of

us are happy, so are our customers.

Participant 117: When someone recognizes me, it makes me want to do more of that

activity, which serves as motivation.

The interview participants were all very vocal about the importance of recognition and their beliefs that recognition needs to come from everyone, not just the manager of the workgroup. Providing timely recognition and following up by sharing the recognition so everyone on the team has an opportunity to celebrate were important to this group. The recognition unit was supported by this business unit.

Unit 6: Provide immediate feedback. Nine of the 11 survey respondents rated survey question 5 (I receive immediate feedback.) with a 4 or 5, and two respondents rated this question with a 3. Interview question number 9 (When you receive immediate feedback, how does that engage you?) found:

Participant 107: I feel like I just received a jolt of caffeine and it excites me. Most of the feedback is positive; when it is negative, it helps me get back on track more quickly.

Participant 120: The feedback gives me an opportunity to learn and grow in my work, and the sooner I know what is working and where I have opportunities, the quicker I can make changes to my work.

Two of the survey responses were a 3. During the interviews, the researcher asked the interview participants what they believed may have led to the lower scores on this unit. One participant shared,

I believe that the feedback is very important and I want to make sure that the feedback I give is as valuable to my peers as possible. It would be nice if my manager

would give me feedback on my feedback to make sure that I am identifying the best feedback possible to give my peers.

Feedback is consistently given within this organization. Each employee talked about the importance of giving feedback right away and how the feedback creates an opportunity to engage the employee in a discussion about the positive impact he or she can have on customers and on each other as employees. Both the survey responses and interview responses supported this unit of analysis.

Unit 7: Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit. When utilizing the business data to determine whether there was or was not support for this unit of analysis, the researcher found that, within the customer survey data, 83% of the customers surveyed rated this unit of analysis a 5. To identify further information on this unit, the interview participants were asked, "When welcoming and following up with your customers, how do you know they are engaged?" (interview question #10). Participants shared:

Participant 105: When I call my customers to follow up, I know they are engaged when they sound happy over the phone and thank me for checking in with them. Some customers take the time to share a personal story with me as well; when they do this I know they are super engaged.

Participant 128: The customers that take time to stop in or spend time on the phone

with me, to ask questions, or see what is new with their products and services are the

most engaged because they take the time to care.

This unit's engaging environment has encouraged its customers to spend time in

sharing personal stories and to build genuine relationships between the employee and

customer. In the employee's eyes, when the customer thanks an employee for service, it

shows that the customer is engaged. This unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 8: Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns. To determine

whether this unit of analysis did or did not have support, the researcher gained access to the

business schedule. The researcher found that this business unit does include changes in the

hours worked to mirror variances in customer traffic patterns. As highlighted in the following

responses to interview question number 11 (How does the work schedule of the business unit

engage the customer?), employees understand the importance of meeting the customer traffic

patterns:

Participant 107: Our store schedules in advance, so that we know who is working

when and we can be available for our customers during busier times. If they

[customers] have to wait too long, they don't hesitate to let us know that they don't

like it.

Participant 128: If we are not staffed correctly, I feel like I am behind and that I am

rushing with my customers. My customers feel the rush as well, and that is not how I

want to be remembered, nor is it the experience I want my customer telling someone else about.

To avoid a rushed atmosphere and to make sure that everyone has adequate personal time, the manager of this organization completes the employee schedule at least four weeks in advance. This gives the unit the opportunity to have the right number of employees in the store to keep them from feeling too rushed with the customers. Based on the business data and interview responses, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 9: Human Sigma. This business has employee engagement scores of 4.58 on a 5-point scale and customer engagement scores of 4.18 on a 5-point scale, both above the median for the organization. With both employee engagement and customer engagement scores falling above the median, the business has reached Human Sigma and supported this unit of analysis.

Summary. Table 4.5 for Case 3 summarizes responses to the survey questions and business documentation.

Table 4.5 *Case 3 responses to survey and business documentation*

Units of Analysis		Response of 4 or 5	Other Responses	Total Responses	% of 4 or 5 Responses	Support/Partially/Not Support
Manage Employees	Set clear expectations and hold employees	11		11	100%	Support

	accountable for outcomes					
	Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit	11		11	100%	Support
Accelerate Employee Engagement	Hold daily employee huddle	10	1 (3)	11	91%	Support
	Write individual development plans	Y	The researcher gained access to development plans for the employees and identified that each employee had an active development plan.			Support
Motivate Employees	Give recognition	11		11	100%	Support
	Provide immediate feedback	9	2 (3,3)	11	82%	Support

	Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit	Y	The researcher looked at the customer engagement survey data and found that customers felt welcomed (rating it a 5, with 5 being "strongly agree") 83% of the time.	Support
Engage Customers' Emotions	Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns	Y	The researcher looked at the schedules of the organization. All schedules were created two weeks in advance and had variance to meet customer traffic patterns.	Support
Human Sigma	Customer Engagement and Employee Engagement Survey Scores	Y	The researcher looked at the customer engagement and employee engagement scores for the business unit and determined that both were above the median levels.	Support

This organization has a large staff for their store, so not all of the employees have the same hours. Due to the presence of part-time employees, this organization works hard to make sure that information is shared with everyone rather than only with those employees in

the store for the morning huddle. In addition, the team gives extra effort in sharing

recognition and connecting during the engagement conversations, so everyone has the

opportunity to learn more about one another and can support each other every day with the

information necessary to be successful. This organization works to be clear on the goals and

expectations while creating an environment where the employees can have fun. The

transparency that the employees have about where they are at in relation to their goals and

the consistency in offering feedback to each other highlights the importance of the peer-

coaching aspect in the organization. The group feels that feedback is necessary for continued

improvement and appreciates the trust that has been established to give and receive feedback.

Each of the nine units were supported by the responses given on the surveys and the business

data reviewed by the researcher, and were further validated in the interviews conducted by

the researcher.

Case 4

Case 4 is a financial organization in the Midwest with 14 employees. The

organization offers multiple financial products and specializes in customers who want to set

up trust accounts to manage their wealth. Nine employees returned completed surveys, and

five of those employees participated in an interview with the researcher. Of the five

interviewed, four employees were individual contributors and one employee was a manager.

Four employees were female and one was male. Experience ranged from 3 to 16 years of

employment with the business.

Units of analysis.

Unit 1: Set expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes. Eight survey respondents rated survey question 1 (My manager sets clear expectations and holds me accountable for the outcomes.) with a 4 or 5. One survey respondent rated the question a 3. When asked the second interview question linked to this unit of analysis (Share how you, or your manager, hold employees accountable to the expectations that are set.), respondents indicated support for this question:

Participant 101: Each of us has expectations based upon our position and those expectations that are set at the corporate level. My manager is responsible for us meeting those expectations and works to help us be successful.

Participant 124: As a manager, for those expectations that I set, I ask questions of my team to get their opinion and then I communicate to them what my expectation is. I work with a group of talented individuals, so I often do not have to set expectations outside of the common expectations that we all need to meet for the organization.

When asked the third interview question (How do you, or your manager, hold employees accountable to the expectations set?), participants shared:

Participant 113: Every day my manager checks in with me and we talk about my progress. If I am not on track, my manager offers guidance on what I can do differently to be more successful.

Participant 119: I ask my manger for weekly touch-points where we talk about my progress. We talk every day, but once a week we go deeper and identify activities for the week to accomplish the expectations and exceed the goals.

One of the survey responses on this unit was a 3. When asked about this during the interviews, one employee shared:

I wish my manager would push back to corporate a bit more. It seems that we always talk about the expectations, but I am not sure that my opinion is being shared with my manager's manager. This would be helpful to me in knowing that someone outside of this business cares about what I think.

The manager determined how to share information in a way that gives employees the ability to give feedback on what they can control. For those items that the employees do not control, due to the expectations set at a corporate level, the team has found power in talking about what each employee can do to meet the expectations and how they can support one another. With the survey responses and the interview responses, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 2: Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit. Eight survey respondents rated survey question 2 (Our workgroup discusses Q12 and CE11 weekly, at a minimum.) with a 4 or 5. One survey respondent rated the question a 3. When asked what the weekly engagement dialogue sounded like (interview question #4), interview participants shared:

Participant 101: Someone from our team is in charge of engagement for the week and they lead one huddle a week that focuses on an engagement question. It is nice that we all have the opportunity to lead the huddle and it gives us the opportunity to think about the questions from different perspectives.

Participant 124: As a manager, I try to cover a couple of things with the team weekly. First, a review of our scores and dialogue around what is going well and what we need to improve. Second, I have someone different lead the meetings, and they come prepared with one of the questions and share what it means to them. This helps us get to know each other better and continues to bond us as a team.

One survey response rated this unit a 3. When asked about a potential reason for this during the interviews, the researcher received several "I don't know" responses from the interview participants. Each interview participant felt this was important and was working well within the business.

Each member of the team has the opportunity to lead the weekly engagement dialogue. During the interviews, team members were excited to share how fun it is to lead the discussion and how different the conversations are from week to week due to the individual strengths of the employee leading the discussion. By sharing the leadership of these meetings, each individual team member has the ability to shine in front of their team and to add their own priorities to the meeting as a way to positively impact engagement. According to the survey responses and the interviews, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 3: Hold daily team huddle. Each of the survey respondents rated survey question 3 (My workgroup has a daily huddle.) with a 4 or 5. Two interview questions were utilized to determine support for this unit of analysis. The first question was "What topics does your team discuss in the daily huddle?" (interview question 5), and response highlights included:

Participant 113: Every day we talk about the results from yesterday and how we are doing as a team week-to-date and month-to-date against our goals. We also talk about success and where we fell short and share our appointments and schedules for the day so we know where we may need to fill in for each other.

Participant 116: Our huddle is the same format every day, and we talk about success from the day before, how we did against our goals for the day, and where we are at for the week, we talk about who is out for the day and what our floor coverage looks like and we close with any questions the team has.

The second question asked was "How does the huddle impact engagement?" (interview question 6), and the following information was shared:

Participant 113: I think of the huddle as a pre-game warm-up and it gets me ready and focused for the day.

Participant 119: Everyone on the team walks away knowing what is going on in the store for the day. Starting the morning with the huddle is smart and gets everyone ready for the day.

The huddle in this organization consistently occurs in the morning, prior to the store opening, and follows a similar format every day so the employees know what to expect. Getting everyone together in the morning serves as an opportunity to come up with a game plan for the day and allows everyone on the team to ask questions or suggest opportunities for the team to be successful that day. According to the survey responses and the interview data, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 4: Write individual development plans. The researcher gained access to development plans for the employees of this organization. Each member of this organization has a development plan in place and meets to discuss their plan, and progress on their plan, with their manager on a quarterly basis. During the interview, question number 7 (How has your individual development plan contributed to your level of engagement?) was asked to further the findings for this fourth unit of analysis. Interview participants shared:

Participant 101: The plan reminds me that I am in charge of my future with the organization.

Participant 113: It is my game plan for my career. I have a choice in how I contribute to the organization, and those choices will help me advance my career.

Employees talked about feeling empowermed over their future career growth with the organization. The business data and interview responses showed support for this unit of analysis.

Unit 5: Give recognition. Each of the survey respondents rated this question a 4 or 5. When asked during the interviews, "How does your workgroup utilize recognition as a form of motivation?" (interview question #8), participants shared:

Participant 101: I tend to notice it more when someone is having a tough time with something, recognizing that makes it possible for someone to re-engage themselves and feel positive about what they are contributing.

Participant 116: Our team agreed to strive to have fun every day, and we use recognition to keep the mood light and encourage each other to have fun and do our best work.

Recognition serves as a way to help people not to fall into a rut during their workday. By identifying areas of opportunity, the team felt really supported by one another. They knew that someone else in the store had their best interests in mind as everyone works to be successful. The recognition unit was supported by this business.

Unit 6: Provide immediate feedback. Each of the nine respondents rated survey question 5 (I receive immediate feedback.) with a 4 or 5. Interview question number 9 (When you receive immediate feedback, how does that engage you?) found:

Participant 101: Coaching in the moment helps all of us work together to make sure

we are focused on all of the right things. By telling each other what we see we, as a

team, can be even more successful.

Participant 124: We work to be specific in our feedback, and my job, as a manager, is

to be a good model of that with my team. You will not hear "great job," you will hear

"great job, that customer smiled when you remembered his son scored the winning

goal in the game last week." Offering a true replay of the moment gives us a chance

to really diagnose the behavior that worked well or that needs to be improved and is

specific enough for both of us to recall the actual interaction that just occurred.

Each employee was very clear that the main reason for providing immediate feedback

is not only to show support for a co-worker, but also to capture a specific impact of the

interaction. By going a step further to identify what the impact was to the customer, the

employee is able to tie the feedback to engagement right away and either do more of the

behavior or change the behavior to have a more positive outcome. Both the survey responses

and interview responses supported this unit of analysis.

Unit 7: Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up

after visit. When utilizing the business data to determine whether there was or was not

support for this unit of analysis, the researcher found that, within the customer survey data,

92% of the customers surveyed rated this unit of analysis a 5. To identify further information

on this unit, the interview participants were asked "When welcoming and following up with

your customers, how do you know they are engaged?" (interview question #10). Participants shared:

>Participant 113: Many of our customers remember our names or acknowledge something one of my kids was in the paper for. That tells me they think of me as more than just their service provider, and that makes me feel valued which, in turn, engages me and reminds me of how engaged they are in our relationship.

>Participant 116: If a customer comes in upset with me about something, I know they are not engaged, as they are not willing to give me a chance to determine why something happened. When they come in and ask, I know they are engaged and care about me just as I care about them.

Employees talked about their customers as though they were friends. Sharing stories of how they know their customers outside of the store and work with them at church or by volunteering showed that the connection created at work goes far beyond the business. When the customer becomes more of a friend, it is easier to fix a mistake that occurred or ask more questions while working to deepen their business relationship through additional products and services for the customer. This unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 8: Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns. To determine whether this unit of analysis did or did not have support, the researcher gained access to the business schedule. The researcher found that the manager works to complete the schedule in advance of the workday and, as a result, has the opportunity to move lunches and shifts around to adjust to the busier times in the store. As highlighted in the following responses to

interview question number 11 (How does the work schedule of the business unit engage the customer?), employees understand the importance of shifting the schedule to meet the needs of their customers:

> Participant 116: Our schedule is built around busy times, and we work to have everyone available we can during those times. We move our lunches to be earlier or later so that when customers come in over their lunch we are available to help them. Customers recognize this and score us higher on our service surveys.

> Participant 124: My goal as a manager is to staff our employees based upon predicted peak times. When we are short-staffed, we have an all-hands-on-deck strategy so that anyone not servicing a customer comes to the center of the store and engages the customers waiting in dialogue and helps them with their question or business need. When we fall short of this, our customers tell us when they complete their surveys.

The interview respondents commented that, when their schedules do not meet the needs of the customer traffic, their customers are quick to let them know about this problem. According to the business data and interview responses, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 9: Human Sigma. This business has employee engagement scores of 4.63 on a 5-point scale and customer engagement scores of 4.44 on a 5-point scale, both above the median for the organization. With both employee engagement and customer engagement scores falling above the median, the business has reached Human Sigma and supports this unit of analysis.

Summary. Table 4.6 for Case 4 lists responses to the survey questions and business documentation.

Table 4.6 *Case 4 responses to survey and business documentation*

Units of Analysis		Response of 4 or 5	Other Responses	Total Responses	% of 4 or 5 Responses	Support/Partially/Not Support
Manage Employees	Set clear expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes	8	1 (3)	9	89%	Support
	Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit	8	1 (3)	9	89%	Support
Accelerate Employee Engagement	Hold daily employee huddle	9		9	100%	Support

	Write individual development plans	Y	The researcher gained access to development plans for the employees and identified that each employee had an active development plan.			Support
Motivate Employees	Give recognition	9		9	100%	Support
	Provide immediate feedback	9		9	100%	Support
Engage Customers' Emotions	Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit	Y	The researcher looked at the customer engagement survey data and found that customers felt welcomed (rating it a 5, with 5 being "strongly agree") 92% of the time.			Support
	Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns	Y	The researcher looked at the schedules of the organization. All schedules were created four weeks in advance and scheduled employees at varying times to meet customer demand.			Support
Human	Customer	Y	The researcher looked at the			Support

Sigma	Engagement and Employee Engagement Survey Scores		customer engagement and employee engagement scores for the business unit and determined that both were above the median levels.	

This team of employees has worked together for at least three years, and during that time the manager has worked to identify the strengths of each team member to continue to develop each employee while also giving the employees the voice and tools to develop one another and to deepen their own engagement. The employees interviewed had a strong understanding of the priorities of the organization and knew their fellow employees well enough to share how everyone was doing in relation to the goals. It was also evident that every employee has the opportunity to share opinions, and together everyone comes up with a plan for the success of the team. As one participant stated:

> It is interesting to think about these activities. I do way more than this every day, and as I think about it, these are truly the most important when it comes to having my team prepared during the day and reacting appropriately. I am going to meet with my team to see what other activities we can cut out while continuing to focus on these main pieces.

It is also clear that this team is always looking for continued improvement as they worked "smarter versus harder," as one participant stated. Each of the nine units were supported by

the responses given on the surveys and the business data reviewed by the researcher and were further validated in the interviews conducted by the researcher.

Case 5

Case 5 is a financial organization in the Midwest with 10 employees. The organization offers multiple financial products and specializes in customers who are working with larger commercial properties and business ventures. Seven employees completed surveys, and four of those employees participated in an interview with the researcher. Of the four interviewed, three employees were individual contributors and one employee was a manager. Three employees were female and one was male. Experience ranged from 4 to 24 years of employment with the business.

Units of analysis.

Unit 1: Set expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes. Five survey respondents rated survey question 1 (My manager sets clear expectations and holds me accountable for the outcomes.) with a 4 or 5. Two respondents rated the questions a 3. When asked the second interview question linked to this unit of analysis (Share how you, or your manager, hold employees accountable to the expectations that are set.), the following answers were among those indicating support for this question:

Participant 109: My manager tells me why the expectation has been set and asks what I believe I can do to meet the expectation.

Participant 122: My manager lets me know how the expectations affect me as an employee and the benefits of meeting the expectations for both myself and my customers.

When asked the third interview question (How do you, or your manager, hold employees accountable to the expectations set?), participants shared:

Participant 123: My manager helps me identify ways that I can meet the goals and then checks in on my progress weekly. It is great having the extra support, and I know if I have questions or problems, my manager is there to help.

Participant 122: My manager meets with me consistently [weekly] and we talk about my results in relation to the goals.

With this unit being partially supported by the survey respondents, the researcher was curious as to why the interview responses were favorable, but the survey responses were mixed. Employees indicated that their manager can sometimes do more talking than listening to the employee opinions. Also, because the manager does such a good job of making individuals accountable for expectations, individual employees may feel like they are on their own to accomplish the objectives. This unit remained partially supported.

Unit 2: Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit. All survey respondents rated survey question 2 (Our workgroup discusses Q12 and CE11 weekly, at a minimum.) with a 4 or 5. When asked what the weekly engagement dialogue sounded like (interview question #4), interview participants shared:

Participant 122: One huddle a week is devoted just to our customer survey scores and

what our customers are telling us. We then identify examples of what we have done

or seen others do during the week that led to the scores received. Then we all agree on

what we are doing well and where we have additional opportunities to be more

effective.

Participant 123: We have an opportunity to talk about what we are doing well and

where we have opportunities to provide better service or what we as employees need

to better our engagement. This is part of our huddle every week, and we take about 5

to 10 minutes every week to talk about engagement.

The participants talked about their weekly engagement focus during the interviews.

They emphasized the importance of taking time every week to review the survey answers and

engagement scores, talk about what each individual employee believes is leading to the

positive results, and discuss opportunities for improvement. According to the survey

responses and the interviews, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 3: Hold daily team huddle. Each of the survey respondents rated survey

question 3 (My workgroup has a daily huddle.) with a 4 or 5. Two interview questions were

utilized to determine support for this unit of analysis. The first question was "What topics

does your team discuss in the daily huddle?" (interview question 5), and response highlights

were:

Participant 123: Typically, we talk about results, both service scores and sales numbers, and we share schedules for the day along with what times of the day we believe will be most busy based upon appointments, traffic, and staffing.

Participant 122: Our huddle follows the same format every day. We talk about our service scores and surveys, our sales results, who is out for the day, and what customers we have scheduled to come in today for appointments.

The second question asked was "How does the huddle impact engagement?" (interview question 6), and the following information was shared:

Participant 127: My engagement is always higher after the huddle, as I feel more connected to my team and feel like we have a joint plan that we are all working together to execute for the day.

Participant 123: The huddle makes me feel proud of what I did yesterday and excited about what I can do today. It gets me smiling in the morning!

The huddle serves as a way to get everyone energized and excited about the day ahead. Connecting with each other in the morning is an opportunity to gain commitment and set a plan of action for the day. Following a similar format for the daily huddle also keeps the expectations clear, so employees know what to expect from each other during the huddle. Looking at the survey responses and the interview data, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 4: Write individual development plans. The researcher gained access to development plans for the employees within this organization. The researcher found that each employee had a development plan in place and had key activities and target dates in place for completion of the activities. During the interview, question number 7 (How has your individual development plan contributed to your level of engagement?) was asked to further the findings for this fourth unit of analysis. Interview participants shared:

Participant 109: My plan gives me an opportunity to identify what I want to work on and any training or job shadowing that I want to complete. It is great to know that my company values me and believes in my future ability by taking the time to support my development.

Participant 123: I have never worked for someone that helped me put together a development plan. It makes me want to work even harder because I know someone at work cares about me.

The development plan serves as a key activity in employee development and also increases employee engagement and commitment to the organization. The business data and interview responses showed support for this unit of analysis.

Unit 5: Give recognition. Six of the survey respondents rated this question a 4 or 5, while one survey respondent rated this question a 3. When asked during the interviews, "How does your workgroup utilize recognition as a form of motivation?" (interview question #8), participants shared:

Participant 127: My team is very close and does a great job of genuinely thanking and congratulating each other for their efforts. We have small gifts for perfect surveys, and as much as the team enjoys the gift, they enjoy the attention from their team members even more.

Participant 123: After five perfect customer surveys in a row, my manager takes my lunch order and brings it in for me. It is fun to share my order in the huddle and even more fun for my team members to congratulate me and thank me for my efforts.

One survey respondent rated this unit as a 3. When the researcher probed further in the interviews, one participant shared,

I only work part time, so do not have as much of an opportunity to be recognized as my peers. My schedule typically has me here during the busier times of the day, and because of that I feel that the recognition isn't as high because we are all busy. We have an opportunity to determine how to be more consistent in recognition when we are busy and slow.

Recognition seemed fun within this business. Employees have a gift basket, and when they achieve certain results or receive positive comments about their service from a customer, they get to choose a gift from the basket. The basket is stocked with the employees' favorite items, including snacks, movie passes, coffee cards, and candles. The employees always have a say in what goes in the basket for gifts. The recognition unit was supported by this business.

Unit 6: Provide immediate feedback. Each of the seven respondents rated survey question 5 (I receive immediate feedback.) with a 4 or 5. Interview question number 9 (When you receive immediate feedback, how does that engage you?) found:

Participant 123: The feedback right away means someone cares enough about me to share what they saw or heard. Giving it to me right away gives me a chance to make changes; if no one tells me, I can't change.

Participant 127: The goal of the feedback is to provide immediate recognition or specifics on why a change is needed. When I see and hear things, I have an obligation to share, as that is the only way to keep the team focused and doing their best work. If the feedback isn't given right away, the impact of the feedback is lessened.

Feedback between employees in this organization is viewed as a gift. The employees talked about how they care about each other enough to give prompt feedback and trust that the feedback is given with the intention of helping each other meet their goals. Both the survey responses and interview responses supported this unit of analysis.

Unit 7: Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit. When utilizing the business data to determine whether or not there was support for this unit of analysis, the researcher found that, within the customer survey data, 83% of the customers surveyed rated this unit of analysis a 5. To discover further information on this unit, the interview participants were asked, "When welcoming and following up with your

customers, how do you know they are engaged?" (interview question #10). Participants

shared:

> Participant 122: We acknowledge our customers right when they enter the door. I
>
> know they are engaged when they acknowledge me right back and smile as they come
>
> to meet with me.

> Participant 127: Engaged customers care about us as people, and they know that we
>
> will help them in any way that we can. You know this because they give you good
>
> eye contact, listen to you, and ask you for your advice.

Customer engagement is aided by a trivia game the employees have created. Each

week, the employees post different trivia questions on a wall by the store entrance and create

dialogue with the customers about the trivia question. Some customers come in just to check

out the weekly trivia questions and to have a cup of coffee while visiting with the employees.

This unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 8: Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns. To determine

whether this unit of analysis did or did not have support, the researcher gained access to the

business schedule. The researcher found that the manager changes the schedule to increase

staff at times when the manager believes the customer traffic will be higher. Taking into

account common payday dates, holidays, and lunch-hour traffic, more employees are

scheduled during the busiest times. As highlighted in the following responses to interview

question number 11 (How does the work schedule of the business unit engage the

customer?), employees understand the importance of matching their working hours to the times it is most convenient for their customers to come in.

> Participant 122: The best way to engage our customers is to be available to greet them and take care of their reason for coming in. If we are understaffed, we are not as effective, and our customers tell us in their surveys.

> Participant 123: The surveys tell me that customers do not like to wait more than one or two minutes to be waited on. When they have to wait due to us not being properly staffed, our scores reflect that.

This store utilizes their schedule as a way to engage customers in more immediate conversation. When employees are available immediately for their customers, it creates an engaging environment that increases engagement of the customers and is reflected in the customer-survey feedback. According to the business data and interview responses, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 9: Human Sigma. This business has employee engagement scores of 4.17 on a 5-point scale and customer engagement scores of 4.0 on a 5-point scale, both above the median for the organization. With both employee engagement and customer engagement scores falling above the median, the business has reached Human Sigma and supported this unit of analysis.

Summary. Table 4.7 for Case 5 lists responses to the survey questions and business documentation.

Table 4.7 *Case 5 responses to survey and business documentation*

Units of Analysis		Response of 4 or 5	Other Responses	Total Responses	% of 4 or 5 Responses	Support/Partially/Not Support
Manage Employees	Set clear expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes	5	2 (3,3)	7	71%	Partially Support
	Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit	7		7	100%	Support
Accelerate Employee Engagement	Hold daily employee huddle	7		7	100%	Support
	Write individual development	Y	The researcher gained access to development plans for the employees and identified that each			Support

	plans			employee had an active development plan.		
Motivate Employees	Give recognition	6	1 (3)	7	86%	Support
	Provide immediate feedback	7		7	100%	Support
Engage Customers' Emotions	Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit	Y	The researcher looked at the customer engagement survey data and found that customers felt welcomed (rating it a 5, with 5 being "strongly agree") 83% of the time.			Support
	Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns	Y	The researcher looked at the schedules of the organization. All schedules were created two weeks in advance, and employees were scheduled at varied times to meet customer traffic patterns in the business.			Support
Human Sigma	Customer Engagement and	Y	The researcher looked at the customer engagement and employee engagement scores for the business			Support

	Employee Engagement Survey Scores		unit and determined that both were above the median levels.	

The employees working together in this business unit were clear that the expectations set by their manager or the organization were set up to help them be successful with their customers. Comments made in response to each of the eight units consistently indicated that the customer is the key focus and is at the center of all employee decisions. The workgroup has clear priorities and expectations of each other and of the goals that they expect to achieve. By working together to give feedback, recognizing one another for accomplishments, and working to determine what the engagement questions mean to employees and customers, this work group has a clear understanding of common priorities and how to support one another in the achievement of those priorities. Eight of the nine units were supported by the responses given on the surveys and were further validated in the interviews conducted by the researcher. One unit, setting expectations and holding employees accountable, was partially supported in this case.

Case 6

Case 6 is a financial organization in the Midwest with 22 employees. The organization offers multiple financial products and specializes in customers looking to secure a new mortgage loan or refinance an existing mortgage. Fourteen employees returned completed surveys, and seven of those employees participated in an interview with the

researcher. Of the seven interviewed, six employees were individual contributors and one

employee was a manager. Four employees were female and three were male. Experience

ranged from 4 to 14 years of employment with the business.

Units of analysis.

Unit 1: Set expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes. Twelve

survey respondents rated survey question 1 (My manager sets clear expectations and holds

me accountable to the outcomes.) with a 4 or 5. One respondent rate the question a 3, and one

respondent rated the question a 2. When asked the second interview question linked to this

unit of analysis (Share how you, or your manager, hold employees accountable to the

expectations that are set.), participants' responses included the following:

> Participant 118: If the expectation is the same for everyone, the expectation is shared
>
> in the huddle and we have a chance to ask questions and clarify. If the expectation is
>
> just an expectation for me, my manager shares it with me in our one-on-one, and we
>
> talk about the expectation and what I can do to meet it.

> Participant 104: My manager is clear in the message delivered and gives specifics as
>
> to what is in it for me and for my customers when I meet or follow the expectation.

When asked the third interview question (How do you, or your manager, hold

employees accountable to the expectations set?), participants shared:

Participant 110: It is up to me to meet the expectations, and my manager provides

coaching to help me and shares how others are meeting their goals so I can learn other

options and try different activities to be as successful as possible.

Participant 112: My manager highlights the areas that I am doing well in, and we talk

about where I have opportunities to do better.

One survey respondent rated this unit a 3 and one survey respondent rated this

question a 2. When asked in the interviews what could have led to these two lower responses,

one interview participant shared,

I am not sure. Whoever rated this unit lower needs to share with our manager what is

causing this. It would be unfortunate for someone to feel that the expectations or

accountability is not where it needs to be; it is too important for someone to not feel

good about. I am going to ask a couple of questions during our next engagement

conversation to make sure everyone on the team has their needs met.

At this workplace, meeting expectations is really a team effort where the manager

provides the expectations and works to support the employees in creating individual plans for

success. Once the plan is in place, the employees work together to share what is working and

what is not working so that everyone in the store can be as successful as possible. According

to the survey responses and interview responses, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 2: Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the

business unit. All survey respondents rated survey question 2 (Our workgroup discusses Q12

and CE11 weekly, at a minimum.) with a 4 or 5. When asked what the weekly engagement dialogue sounded like (interview question #4), interview participants shared:

> Participant 110: Every month we focus on one of the Q12 questions, and each week gives us an opportunity to share what the question means to us. The weekly dialogue also gives us a chance to dig deeper into our service scores to see what we can change to continue to improve our overall results. It is nice to have everyone on the team sharing and focusing on behaviors that we believe will make a positive difference in both employee and customer engagement levels.

> Participant 118: Our focus weekly is on what trends we are seeing on our customer surveys and how we are doing in relation to the Q12 question of the month that we as a team chose to focus on. It serves as a great touch-point to see how engaged everyone is, and as we have new employees join the team, it provides a consistent opportunity to continue to get to know everyone on the team.

Selecting one employee engagement and one customer engagement question per month for discussion gives the team a chance to be curious each week as they dig deeper into what the questions mean to each employee. Together they are able to share meaning and determine what activities everyone will focus on to make the biggest difference. Keeping it simple and focusing on one or two things supports the group by making expectations and methods of execution clear. According to the survey responses and the interviews, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 3: Hold daily team huddle. Each of the survey respondents rated survey question 3 (My workgroup has a daily huddle.) with a 4 or 5. Two interview questions were utilized to determine support for this unit of analysis. The first question was "What topics does your team discuss in the daily huddle?" (interview question 5), and response highlights were:

> Participant 104: We share updates on any projects or initiatives going on that affect us, and we talk about any service surveys that came back. We also talk about goals and the progress we have made toward them and who is in the store for the day.

> Participant 112: We talk about strengths and gaps from the day before, who is out of the office for the day, and what we expect during our busy times. If any customer surveys came in, we share those as well.

The second question asked was "How does the huddle impact engagement?" (interview question 6), and the following quotes are highlights from the responses received:

> Participant 104: When I leave the huddle, I feel jazzed and ready to start my day.
> Participant 118: The huddle is fun and makes me feel connected to my teammates every day.

The huddle serves as a connection point for everyone to start their day unified in their goals and to support each each other's needs for success. Daily huddles have a positive intention and are meant to serve as a connection point to align everyone to common goals

and opportunities. Looking at the survey responses and the interview data, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 4: Write individual development plans. The researcher gained access to the development plans for the business's employees, and each of the employees had a current plan in place. The researcher found that the manager and employee both had made notes on the individual plans, updating progress toward goals, and had made changes to the activities that the employee was interested in completing. During the interview, question number 7 (How has your individual development plan contributed to you level of engagement?) was asked to further the findings for this fourth unit of analysis. Interview participants shared:

Participant 104: Knowing that I have a career path is great, and I feel valued by my organization and manager. My career path not only keeps me focused on meeting my goals today, but also has me excited about continuing to learn for my next opportunity.

Participant 118: I am grateful that I have found the right position for me to be successful in. My plan is focused on continuing to learn and grow in my role, and it excites me to know that my manager values my talents, and even though I don't want a different position, I still get to go to training or take on additional projects to develop my skills. It is a great feeling.

Those interviewed expressed a strong commitment to the organization and specifically gave credit to their career paths being a positive difference in their work lives. A

manager who spends time developing employees for the future, rather than focusing only on meeting daily goals, supports the employees' growth in their jobs and in the organization. Investment in employee development is important to these participants. The business data and interview responses showed support for this unit of analysis.

Unit 5: Give recognition. Of the 14 survey respondents, 13 rated survey question number 4 (I receive an appropriate amount of recognition.) with a 4 or 5, and one survey respondent rate this question a 3. When asked during the interviews, "How does your workgroup utilize recognition as a form of motivation?" (interview question #8), participants shared:

> Participant 104: One of the questions we ask everyone when they are new is how they like to be recognized, and that is how we try to recognize everyone. It is a great way to build relationships and make people feel special at work.

> Participant 118: The recognition shared amongst my team is genuine so it motivates me to do more, because I know that others really care and that my performance affects everyone else on the team. I don't want to let anyone down.

One survey respondent rated this unit a 3. When asked about this during the interviews, there was a sense of uncertainty among the participants. One participant shared,

> This is a really important activity for us. I don't believe you can recognize people too much. I am not sure why someone would have rated this lower, as we just talked

about recognition a couple of weeks ago and everyone expressed that they felt we

were doing a good job with this.

This organization specifically asks team members what motivates them and how they like to be recognized. By taking the time to learn about each individual, employees are able to give recognition that feels genuine and individualized, which supports employee engagement. The recognition unit of analysis was supported by this business.

Unit 6: Provide immediate feedback. Twelve of the 14 survey respondents rated survey question 5 (I receive immediate feedback.) with a 4 or 5, response while two respondents gave a 3 rating. Interview question number 9 (When you receive immediate feedback, how does that engage you?) found:

Participant 108: It builds teamwork, because I know that everyone is giving

appropriate feedback and that together we will all become better as individuals and as

a team.

Participant 112: The feedback lets me know how I am progressing towards my goals.

When I receive the feedback, I know the person giving it to me cares enough about

me to help me get better at my job and with my customers.

Two of the survey respondents rated this unit as a 3. When asked during the interviews why there may have been some lower scores, one participant shared,

I value the feedback that I receive very much. I would have rated this higher, but as I

was thinking about it, I realized that I don't always know what to do when I receive

the feedback. It would be great if my feedback would be included in my development

plan and I have an opportunity to share the feedback with my manager so that

together we can determine the highest impact activities for me to work on to improve

my performance the most.

Feedback is viewed as positive in this organization, and the employees assume that

the feedback has a positive intent. Feeling the support from fellow employees helps an

employee to meet goals and provide quality service for customers. According to both the

survey responses and the interview responses, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 7: Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up

after visit. When utilizing the business data to determine whether or not there was support for

this unit of analysis, the researcher found that, within the customer survey data, 85% of the

customers surveyed rated this unit of analysis a 5. To uncover further information on this

unit, the interview participants were asked, "When welcoming and following up with your

customers, how do you know they are engaged?" (interview question #10). Participants

shared:

Participant 106: When most engaged, customers take the time to tell me a story or ask

about my family. I know they care.

Participant 125: Customers will go out of their way to tell me specifically what

someone said or did to make them feel welcomed in our business and cared about as a

customer. Them taking the time to offer positive feedback tells me they are engaged.

Customers are taking the time to give feedback directly to the employees in the store instead of waiting for their survey to come. There is a belief by those interviewed that the customers who give the feedback directly are the most engaged, as they feel comfortable enough with the relationship to share the feedback examples. Customers are also more like friends than customers, which makes the relationships much more special. This unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 8: Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns. To determine whether this unit of analysis did or did not have support, the researcher gained access to the business schedule. The schedule showed that the business was fully staffed at their busiest times, first thing in the morning and over the noon hour. As indicated in the following responses to interview question number 11 (How does the work schedule of the business unit engage the customer?), employees understand the importance of being available during the busiest customer traffic times:

Participant 104: When we are staffed appropriately, our customers don't feel rushed and neither do I. We have an opportunity to really talk and find out what is most important to them and identify the best solutions for their needs.

Participant 118: When we know we are going to be busy, we have one person whose job it is to stand by the door and welcome our customers right when they come into the business and to visit with them while they are in line. This helps to minimize the perception of how long they are waiting, and they tend to not score us lower on our service surveys when it comes to how satisfied they were with the wait.

Knowing that there are times when customers will have to wait, this organization works to greet customers immediately upon entrance, so the customers feel acknowledged and know that someone will be right with them. In addition, by working to adjust the shift schedule to the traffic pattern of the store, the manager keeps people from feeling too rushed and gives customers and employees a chance to share stories to maintain and enhance their relationships with one another. According to the business data and interview responses, this unit of analysis was supported.

Unit 9: Human Sigma. This business has employee engagement scores of 4.26 on a 5-point scale and customer engagement scores of 4.05 on a 5-point scale; both are above the median for the organization. With both employee engagement and customer engagement scores above the median, the business unit has reached Human Sigma and supported this unit of analysis.

Summary. Table 4.8 for Case 6 lists responses to the survey questions and business documentation.

Table 4.8 *Case 6 responses to survey and business documentation*

Units of Analysis		Response of 4 or 5	Other Responses	Total Responses	% of 4 or 5 Responses	Support/Partially/Not Support
Manage Employees	Set clear expectations and hold employees accountable	12	2 (3,2)	14	86%	Support

	for outcomes					
	Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit	14		14	100%	Support
Accelerate Employee Engagement	Hold daily employee huddle	14		14	100%	Support
	Write individual development plans	Y	The researcher gained access to development plans for the employees and identified that each employee had an active development plan.			Support
Motivate Employees	Give recognition	13	1 (3)	14	93%	Support
	Provide immediate feedback	12	2 (3,3)	14	86%	Support
Engage	Welcome	Y	The researcher looked at the			Support

Customers' Emotions	customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit		customer engagement survey data and found that customers felt welcomed (rating it a 5, with 5 being "strongly agree") 85% of the time.	
	Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns	Y	The researcher looked at the schedules of the organization. All schedules were created three weeks in advance. The store was fully staffed at their busiest times (at opening and over the noon hour).	Support
Human Sigma	Customer Engagement and Employee Engagement Survey Scores	Y	The researcher looked at the customer engagement and employee engagement scores for the business unit and determined that both were above the median levels.	Support

Each of the interview participants was very curious about what their team could do differently to be even more successful and supportive of one another. Many shared examples of what individuals within their store do to create and enhance engagement. The group knew each other's birthdays and what their co-workers' favorite colors or snacks were. This work

group spends time digging into employees' personal strengths and interests before they begin to focus on aspects of professional life. These employees' relationships are as strong outside of the workplace as they are within the workplace.

All of the employees interviewed in this organization were very thoughtful about their responses. They took time to formulate answers before speaking and worked hard to consider answers in relation to their work group as well as themselves. One participant stated:

> This was really interesting for me. Thinking about what I do every day and what my peers do every day, it really comes down to having strong relationships with each other. By knowing and caring about one another, we are a team and together we do everything we can to help one another be successful. When we are successful, our customers are successful and everyone thrives.

Each of the nine units of analysis were supported by the responses given on the surveys and were further validated in the interviews conducted by the researcher.

Cross-Case Analysis

The cross-case analysis presents the findings through all six organizations and each of the 52 survey respondents and 30 interview participants. Of the 30 employees interviewed, 24 were individual contributors and six were managers. Twenty-one employees were female and nine were male, and years of experience with the organization ranged from 2 to 24. Each of the eight units were supported by the responses given on the surveys, and the units were further validated in the interviews conducted by the researcher.

Table 4.9 *Aggregate Matrix of Survey Responses and Business Data*

Units of Analysis		Response of 4 or 5	Other Responses	Total Responses	% of 4 or 5 Responses	Support/Partially/ Not Support
Manage Employees	Set clear expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes	46	6 (3,3,3,3,3,2)	52	88%	Support
	Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit	51	1 (3)	52	98%	Support
Accelerate Employee Engagement	Hold daily employee huddle	50	2 (3,3)	52	96%	Support
	Write individual development plans	Y	The researcher gained access to development plans for the employees and identified that each employee had an active development plan.			Support

Motivate Employees	Give recognition	48	4 (3,3,3,3)	52	92%	Support
	Provide immediate feedback	47	5 (3,3,3,3,3)	52	90%	Support
Engage Customers' Emotions	Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit	Y	On average, the customer engagement survey data showed customers felt welcomed (rating it a 5, with 5 being "strongly agree") 85% of the time.			Support
	Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns	Y	The researcher identified that schedules were created between two and four weeks in advance. Each business schedule varies to meet the busier times in the store as a way to have employees available to service the customers.			Support
Human Sigma	Customer Engagement	Y	The researcher looked at the customer engagement and employee			Support

	and Employee Engagement Survey Scores		engagement scores for the business unit and determined that both were above the median levels.	

Overall, employees seemed clear about their expectations, were active in conversations to further employee engagement and customer engagement within their organizations, had a huddle daily to make sure the team had a plan for a successful day, had individual development plans in place, received recognition and feedback, centered customers in shift scheduling decisions, and endeavored to make customers feel welcome in their stores. As a result, each of the business units scored above the median in employee engagement and customer engagement. Each of the nine units of analysis were supported by the responses given on the surveys and were further validated in the interviews conducted by the researcher.

Each business unit supported the researcher's theory in that each of them showed partial to full support for each unit of analysis. Overall, when the data from all six cases was combined, each unit of analysis was fully supported. Table 4.10 shows the results by unit of analysis and each case.

Table 4.10 *Cross-Case Support for Units of Analysis*

Units of Analysis	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Case 5	Case 6	Cross Case

Manage Employees	Set clear expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes	Support	Support	Support	Support	Partially Support	Support	Support
	Hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support
Accelerate Employee Engagement	Hold daily employee huddle	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support
	Write individual development plans	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support
Motivate Employees	Give recognition	Support	Partially Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support
	Provide immediate feedback	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support

Engage Customers' Emotions	Welcome customer immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support
	Schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support
Human Sigma	Customer Engagement and Employee Engagement Survey Scores	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support	Support

Conclusion

The researcher speculated that there were common activities occurring in businesses that had reached Human Sigma. These activities all take place within the four ways of

managing Human Sigma identified by Fleming and Asplund (manage employees, motivate employees, accelerate employee engagement, and engage customers' emotions).

All units of analysis were supported in the survey data and in the individual interviews. Two of the cases had one unit of analysis that was only partially supported; however, the researcher identified support for these units in the interview responses, which indicated that employees felt there was an opportunity to do more of the activity in their business. Due to the strong support of the units of theory, the model does not need revision for this study.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The researcher posited a theory that there were eight common activities occurring in business units that had reached Human Sigma. The eight activities in the researcher's theory were: give recognition, provide immediate feedback, set clear expectations and hold employees accountable for outcomes, hold weekly dialogue to discover meaning/acts of engagement within the business unit, hold daily employee huddle, write individual development plans, welcome customers immediately upon entering the business and follow up after visit, and schedule employees based on customer traffic patterns. Six cases were studied. Each case focused on a financial organization in the Midwest with employee engagement and customer engagement scores above median levels. Survey data was gathered from 52 respondents, and follow-up interviews were conducted with 30 employees. In addition, business data was obtained for each of the six cases.

Discussion of Findings

The research question was "What activities can managers and employees engage in to optimize Human Sigma within the financial services industry?"

Support of the Model. Each of the units of analysis in the model was supported. The interviews highlighted examples of managers and employees caring about each other and working hard to do the right thing for employees and customers. Managers who work hard to do the right thing for their people end up with successful business units because their

employees have the confidence and support to do their jobs well. Those interviewed had clear plans and strong communications with their manager, peers, and customers; they felt confident in their ability to positively impact their customers and make a contribution to the business. Those interviewed also believed that they could have a positive impact on creating and enhancing engagement in their organizations, based upon their actions and commitment to co-workers, whether or not a manager was present in the business on any given day.

For those companies that want to engage their customers, that engagement must start with their employees. When employees feel connected to the brand and the mission of the organization that they represent, they are more inclined to keep their promises and be creative in identifying solutions to meet the needs of customers and the organization. In addition, those employees who are engaged in their roles are more productive, more profitable, stay longer with the company, and have better safety and attendance records. They take pride in creating customer connections (McEwen & Robinson, 2007). McEwen and Robinson's findings indicate that companies have an opportunity to manage both employee engagement and customer engagement in tandem to create the greatest level of overall engagement, Human Sigma.

When a new manager begins to manage a team, this model can serve as a starting point for activities for and communications with team members. A manager has the opportunity to create a forum in which employees can share opinions and clarify expectations, so that the whole team is following a common vision for the unit and the organization. The team can develop relationships with one another and their customers. The team members can learn and grow together while identifying areas in which they are

performing well and areas in which they can further improve. When managers engage employees in such conversations, employees' ideas and opinions will foster relationships and solve problems. Because it is the employees who see the customers every day, and because the employees are the first people to deal with customers' emotions, they are in a position to determine what is and is not working and how changes can be made to enhance customer satisfaction levels. Thus, this model can serve as a catapult for managers to create and enhance employee and customer engagement in their organization. When managers utilize this model and put in place the eight activities identified, the manager has an opportunity to give their employees voice and to utilize all of the ideas and opinions of the team to make the best decisions in relation to increasing engagement of both employees and customers.

Those interviewed for this research used the words "genuine" and "caring" to describe their managers and fellow employees. They used the words "fun" and "excitement" to describe how they felt after their daily huddles and how they felt when they received feedback. They used the words "encouragement" and "compassion" when talking about how their peers and managers supported them in meeting their goals and serving their customers. They used the words "exciting" and "supportive" when talking about how recognition keeps thems engaged. They used the words "creative" and "multiple ideas" when discussing how the weekly engagement dialogue impacts overall success of the business. They used the words "encouraging" and "insightful" when talking about their development plans for their future success. They used the words "committed" and "necessary" when discussing the importance of matching the employee schedules to the customer traffic patters. They used the words "impactful" and "timely" when sharing the importance of receiving immediate

feedback. They used the words "warm" and "friendly" when discussing the need to welcome their customers. These examples of strong word choices show that the eight activities identified do foster engagement and support the corporate values that many organizations aim to achieve. The employees' use of such strong and illustrative words to describe their engagement and the impact of their engagement on customers' engagement indicates powerful feelings of connection with their customers and their organizations. They are *engaged* employees, and they actively work to create engaged customers. The employee, the organization, and the customer can only be successful when all three work in tandem; engagement is the quality that joins them together and multiplies the results.

Changing the Model. While each of the units of the analysis was supported in the original model, it became apparent as the researcher was reviewing the interview notes, and recalling the comments by the participants, that the model needed to be updated to better depict the responses of the study participants. The proposed model was very focused on the four quadrants defined by Fleming and Asplund's four ways of managing (managing employees, motivating employees, accelerating employee performance, and engaging customers' emotions). During the interviews, the dialogue focused on the eight activities in the model rather than the four quadrants that contained them. One participant commented, "these eight activities, when combined, are a great way to launch our engagement performance," and another said, "this mixture of activities hits all aspects of what we try to do as a team every day." Based upon these comments, and the researcher's personal experiences managing engaged teams, the researcher determined that it was necessary to change the model to reflect more accurately the eight activities versus the four quadrants.

When the researcher took all of the data acquired in the research and analyzed how the data worked together to create Human Sigma, the thought of a strong team was vivid in the researcher's mind. This image encompassed the aspects of completing specific activities to improve skills and also included the passion in which a team member much complete the activities for success to occur. It is not enough to simply do the activity in the model, each member of the business group must complete the activities with a belief in the importance of the activity. This "passion" in the activities is what has the potential to take average performance and achieve high performance. Like any team, the group needs a strong coach (manager) to run the activities and each member of the team (employee) must work together to achieve the desired outcome. When any one member of the team fails to complete an activity, or fails to complete the activity to the best of their ability, the result may fall short of the goal. This image and thought process aided the researcher in updating the model to show the individual acitivities that together work to create Human Sigma.

In addition, it became evident to the researcher that the activities in the model impact each other as well as Human Sigma. For example, recognition can happen to the customer (e.g., a customer anniversary or a success the customer had in the community) as well as the employee, so limiting the eight activities to a specific quadrant on the proposed model would not give full value to each of the eight activities and the ways that employees choose to interpret the activities and engage in them.

As a result of the above findings, the updated model eliminated the four quadrants of the model, leaving only the eight activities resulting in Human Sigma in the model. By removing the four quadrants, the model no longer assumes that it is the manager's

responsibility to complete each of the activities; rather, the new model highlights the activities and gives the business the flexibility to determine who does what (manager or employee). For example, one may assume that completing the schedule is the responsibility of a manager. However, the new model does not assume that, because during the interviews the researcher found that some employees were in charge of the schedule as part of their development plans. The daily huddle was found by the researcher to typically be led by the manager; however, when the manager was out or unavailable, another employee led the huddle in the manager's absence. While individual development plans required the support of a manager, the employee had equal or greater responsibility in determining what their career goals were and what activities were most exciting or beneficial to their future development. Like any team, it takes a strong coach (manager) to identify the right activities and to support the development of the team (employee) but a team also requires each member of the team to lead when necessary. The updated model reflects the assumption that any member of the team (manager or employee) may take a leadership role with any one of the activities. In the absence of a manager, the team can be equally successful in the business due to the strong work that the manager has done to set the team up with a strong daily plan of activities and goals in the business unit. This updated model can support a business in managing through a transition periods or when a manager needs to be out of the business for vacation. Giving a business a model to highlight consistent activity expectations gives the team a game plan to follow.

With all of these chances for employees and managers to lead in each of the activities, the researcher chose to eliminate assumptions about who leads and to highlight instead the

activities undertaken so that each member of the business understands expectations. Employees and managers together determine their plan to put the activities in place at their business. The updated model takes into account that while each individual can positively or negatively impact overall engagement, each employee can also implement and utilize the activities in self-management and in peer management.

The updated model keeps Human Sigma at its center. Because Human Sigma is at the core of what a business is trying to attain, the model depicts Human Sigma at the core of the eight activities. The updated model is round rather than square and includes arrows to highlight the importance of the activities consistently occurring and recurring. As was highlighted in the findings, it is important to do these activities daily to "get the team on the same page" and "to keep everyone excited during the full day of work," so the model depicts the activities in uninterrupted, circular motion. When the activities take place continuously, the model will support Human Sigma at the core; if the activities come to a stop and the model breaks, Human Sigma will no longer be maintained at the core of the model. Figure 2 shows the modified theory.

Human Sigma Optimization Theory

Figure 2. Human Sigma Optimization Theory

Implications for Organization Development

In McGregor's (1960)work, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, he states that the ability to create solutions to organizational issues is widely distributed throughout the organization. The capacity belongs to the entire organization and involves the whole system to address systemic issues that are at the center of engagement. This researcher believes that it is important to create and build engagement in organizations and the findings of this study give an example that can be utilized to implement activities that will begin or enhance the engagement process in organizations. Business leaders who wish to maintain and grow their current customer bases can use this information to become more profitable. Promoting the importance and impact of engagement within the business will give employees opportunities to further define what engagement means to them and how they can work together to be successful individually and as a business. While problem solving and learning new skills are important to employees, it is also important to enhance employees' beliefs about what they are able to do with the skills they already possess (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). By focusing on the skills that are already present and that can be and are being utilized, employees will feel better about their current contributions and can develop additional skills for future contributions.

In today's organizations, more than one change often takes place at a time, and multiple groups have priorities that impact the same customers. It is up to the customer-facing employees to explain changes and new products and services and to engage the customer. With all of these changes in play, some teams will be successful and some teams will feel the chaos. In order to manage multiple changes while maintaining and increasing engagement, the activities highlighted in this research can keep employees focused on key

actions and serve as a reminder that without a strong focus on the customer, success will be lost.

As the researcher thought about past teams she has been a part of, the impact of engagement is key to employees enjoying their work. Thinking about working in an environment that has low engagement scores is not something that the researcher would willingly commit to. How must a new employee walking into a disengaged team feel? The impact of increasing engagement scores cascades far beyond only the results of the business; it also impacts the employee emotions, stress levels, desire to come to work, the desire to exceed customer expectations and moves beyond only business into the personal life of any employee. Identifying opportunities to improve overall emotions, confidence and stress levels of employees would support the work of a consultant working in Organization Development.

Limitations of Research

The researcher identified limitations to this study. This study was done as a multiple-case study and was not meant to validate the researcher's theory; rather, it was used to determine whether there was support for the theory. As a result, the research is generalizable to a theoretical proposition but not generalizable to a population.

Research was conducted in the Midwest. The Midwest is culturally different than other areas of the country, so the findings may be influenced based upon culture and geographic norms. In addition, the research was conducted within financial institutions so may be not applicable to other types of organizations.

Each case studied within this research was a workgroup led by an individual identified as a manager. This may limit the research applicability as it relates to self-led teams or self-directed workgroups.

Lastly, the researcher was aware of the potential for her bias to enter into the research. The researcher has worked in the financial industry and has utilized engagement metrics for employees and customers. To limit the bias, the researcher utilized self-reported survey data prior to interviews to support the theory.

Recommendations for Future Research

An area for further research is organizations other than financial institutions; similar studies in other lines of businesses would broaden the support for the model. Once conducted, the research could be furthered by identifying the common activities across multiple lines of business to further define the Human Sigma model.

With the updated model, future research on peer-managed teams would provide an interesting set of data to determine how individuals take ownership of a business unit's engagement. This would also provide additional information on how individuals work to positively impact engagement scores in the absence of a manager.

Research with teams that have lower levels of employee engagement and customer engagement would be beneficial to determine what activities may or may not be occurring. In addition, determining how a team determines how to implement and execute the activities within the model and measuring the engagement over a period of time to monitor engagement results could further validate the model.

Future research should also be directed at how managers and employees communicate and gain confidence in sharing their opinions with others. In addition, research looking at organizations below the median engagement scores could determine what opportunities employees and customers would suggest to create engagement in such organizations.

Because the model is a grouping of activities, further research on the impact of doing some but not all of the activities would further verify which activities are most important in creating engagement. In addition, researching the amount of time it takes to acclimate and engage a new customer or employee would determine how long it takes to build relationships in an effort to reach engagement.

Additional research to identify which elements of the model occur formally and informally and the impact that new-hire orientation and training have on engagement would be an interesting way to identify aspects of the hiring, orientation, training, and management processes that create engagement from the very beginning. Determining what engagement looks like to employees at each of those points could help organizations make all of their interactions with employees (or prospective employees) even more engaging and may accelerate the time it takes to achieve strong employee engagement levels.

The researcher believes that there is conflict in every business. With so much engagement already established, further research on how engaged teams handle conflict could be beneficial in further defining the benefits and risks of Human Sigma.

Finally, this researcher is curious to know whether too much engagement can be a bad thing. Additional research might determine whether those who are most engaged can be

taken advantage of through their strong belief in the purpose of the business or the employee of the business. How much commitment is too much?

Conclusion

Within the context of this research, the researcher identified strong support for the importance of Human Sigma. Developing positive relationships between the employee and the organization, the customer and the organization, and the customer and the employee increase that engagement. Both customers and employees are looking for a company that cares about them as individuals and that is willing to listen to them in order to ensure future success (for both the customer and the business). Employees are engaged when there is an opportunity to impact results, when they can have candid conversations with their managers and peers, and when the customer is put first. Customers are engaged when they feel cared about by the organization and when they have a familiar face to greet them upon entering the store and good listeners as they identify how they wish to meet their financial goals. Creating relationships that lead to engagement is an important topic in today's businesses. Utilizing relationships as a mechanism to hire and retain talented employees and to retain and create loyal customers who will support the growth of the organization is an opportunity that no business leader can ignore.

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Appendix A: Human Sigma Survey

Human Sigma Survey

IRB Log # B09-119-02

The purpose of this survey is to find out how managers and employees work together in engaged and financially successful businesses. The researcher has developed a theory containing what the researcher believes to be key activities in optimizing Human Sigma. The purpose of the study is to support or refute this theory. Your completion of this survey signifies your consent to participate in the study. When completed with the survey, please return to me via email or by faxing to me at 515-473-9497.

Please respond to the following statements by marking the appropriate box rating your level of agreement

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree or disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
1. My manager sets clear expectations and holds me accountable for the outcome.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Our workgroup discusses Q12 and CE11 weekly, at a minimum.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My workgroup has a daily huddle.	1	2	3	4	5

4. I receive an appropriate amount of recognition.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I receive immediate feedback.	1	2	3	4	5

You can contact me directly to learn more about this research. If you are interested in participating in an interview with the researcher to share your experiences, please respond by 01/30/10. You can signify your willingness to participate in an interview via email, phone or by writing your contact information in the "Notes" section below and I will contact you. I can be reached by email at hazweifel@stthomas.edu or via phone at 515-473-9497.

NOTES:_____

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Appendix B: Semi Structured Interview Guide

1. What is your position within the organization? How long have you worked for the organization?

2. Share how you (or your manager) set clear expectations.

3. How do you (or your manager) hold employees accountable to the expectations that are set?

4. What does the weekly engagement dialogue sound like?

5. What topics does your team discuss in the daily huddle?

6. How does the huddle impact engagement?

7. How has your individual development plan contributed to your level of engagement?

8. How does your workgroup utilize recognition as a form of motivation?

9. When you receive immediate feedback, how does that engage you?

10. When welcoming and following up with your customers, how do you know they are engaged?

11. How does the work schedule of the business unit engage the customers?

12. What other comments or thoughts would you like to share?