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Business Resource Groups—Supporting Organizational and Individual Performance Outcomes through the Development of Social Capital & Self-Efficacy

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Grupos de recursos empresariales: apoyo a los resultados organizativos e individuales mediante el desarrollo del capital social y la autoeficacia

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Business Resource Groups – Supporting Organizational and Individual Performance Outcomes Through the Development of Social Capital & Self-Efficacy

ABSTRACT

Business Resource Groups (BRGs) are social networks within organizations, that provide support and networking opportunities for their employees. Established in part to promote an inclusive work environment, BRGs look to deliver the core mission and objectives of the organization, by drawing upon the diversity of its member base. (Kaplan, et.al, 2009). BRGs provide fundamental performance opportunities for their members. Performance opportunities come in two forms, individual and organizational. The individual performance opportunities are through career and leadership development (Friedman & Craig, 2004), volunteering through community outreach, and delivering cultural awareness within the company. The organizational performance opportunities come in the form of some combination of new business development, multicultural marketing, and top-line business growth.

There has been minimal empirical research on BRGs, their efficacy on individual members, or their impact on organizations (Welbourne & McLaughlin, 2013). The purpose of this study is to fill this gap in research by demonstrating how BRGs can affect organizational and individual performance. This research demonstrates how BRGs, through the development of social capital, can act as mediators, bridging the relationship between internal and external stakeholders. The development of confidence through self-efficacy (Bandura, 1978) underscores the value gained for the BRG team members. This study follows an Asian Pacific American (APA) BRG within a Multi-National Company (MNC), chronicling their approach to enhancing individual and organizational performance. In this context, organizational performance is synonymous with business growth (i.e., sales, volume, gross profit) within the company. Individual performance is synonymous with attaining confidence through on-the-job learning and task accomplishments.

The research methods used in this study were through a mixed method design. From a qualitative perspective, a Participative Action Research (A/R) design was used. As the direct leader and the primary researcher, I played a change catalyst role within the BRG, by partnering with internal and external stakeholders to influence, observe, and reflect on the process to achieve organizational performance. Grounded Theory was also used to convert the participant's sentiments into emerging themes drawn from the A/R experience. From a quantitative methods perspective, a quasi-experimental design was used. Key business performance measures are used to demonstrate before and after effects the development of social capital may have both inside and outside of the organization. This mixed method approach provides a powerful and compelling view of how BRGs can impact organizational and individual performance.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

BRGs “are communities within a corporation that are organized around the employees’ similar circumstances and common goals” (Douglas, 2008: 12). Key characteristics of BRGs include providing social support, influencing career growth, and providing a platform for learning and development in the workplace. BRGs are also known as affinity groups, employee resource networks, and employee resource groups. For consistency, the term BRG will be used throughout this paper. In the late 1960s, BRGs were established to drive Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) imperatives, such as creating a fair and equitable work environment, by building social networks across people with similar interests and backgrounds. Over the years, BRGs have evolved to take on broader organizational goals, such as community outreach, professional development, and business innovation (Welbourne et al., 2015). Today MNCs aspire to demonstrate how their BRGs can become a true business resource. Currently there has been no research which demonstrates tangible organizational performance benefits derived from BRGs (Welbourne & McLaughlin, 2013). This gap in the literature is the main focal point of this research.

1.1 Building Internal and External Relationships

Historically, BRG’s primary purpose has been to develop their membership base. This development process relies on both formal and informal methods to create internal relationships. Formal approaches include social networking events, which promote a sense of community and belonging. Learning and development (L&D) is another formal approach. L&D can focus on basic networking skills, presentation skills, leadership development, and general business acumen (Green, 2018). Members of the BRG and/or guest speakers within the company provide seminars to educate and develop BRG participants. Planning for key BRG events is another avenue for personal development and creating relationships. BRG volunteers take on vital roles in the strategic and tactical execution of

hosting organization-wide events. These actions require project planning, working with BRG team members to execute program tasks, partnering with senior executives who advocate the programs, and interfacing with the community to solicit participation in the events. The skills gained through these formal methods prepare BRG members to be leaders, and to take ownership of their own career path and development. The exposure to different leaders helps create social capital and expands the BRG member's relationships, both horizontally and vertically in the firm. Informally, BRGs provide mentorship opportunities to help coach, develop, and guide team members (Friedman, 1999). Often, senior leaders within the organization provide this type of support, further enhancing the positive relationships that contribute to the BRG members growth. Creating relationships outside of the organization has been typically done through community outreach and volunteer activities planned by the BRG. Guest speaking opportunities, panel discussions, participating in local fundraising banquets, all symbolize one aspect of building relationships and social capital. Another aspect of creating relationships outside of the organization is through business development. Creating relationships for business development is not a typical focus for BRGs. Business relationships are an untapped and hidden opportunity within organizations. As BRG members identify and assimilate with their peers, based on cultural, work-related, or common values and past experiences (Welbourne & McLaughlin, 2013), BRGs can leverage those very same backgrounds to establish relationships with potential customers. These relationships can start with establishing common ground. In a multicultural customer environment, common ground begins with sharing similar cultural or social mores, with those who have a shared characteristic or life experience. Establishing trust based on these similarities is the first step in building a transparent relationship. The development of social capital both internally and externally, plays a vital role in delivering against the Asian Pacific American (APA) BRG goal of supporting organizational performance. Using prospect data, which includes attributes from the US Census, potential customers were segmented based on ethnicity, sales channel, and location. In this A/R study, the APA BRG

established a relationship with customers who they identify with, and who represent their nationality (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Indian, etc.). The goal is not to sell in pricing information or product offerings like a traditional salesperson, but rather to build a relationship based on common ground and cultural similarities. Through the A/R reflective learning life cycle, the BRG built relationships with Asian trade organizations (ATOs) that represent thousands of members of common descent. The BRG pinpointed opportunities to develop social capital based on existing ties that were embedded within their member base and with other leaders in the MNC. The A/R life cycle spans a twenty-month period. This period is necessary as it allows the participants to effectively experiment, learn, reflect, and improve on their experiences as they develop relationships and deliver results. The Quasi-Experiment extends an additional year beyond the A/R cycle, allowing for a before and after performance comparison, post BRG intervention. Therefore, this research design falls under the criteria used in longitudinal studies (Shadish, Cook, and Campbell, 2001). In the discussion chapter, I will reflect on the critical importance of time required to effectively formulate the emergence of construct and theories that unfold, and how future research can benefit from a longitudinal design approach.

This dissertation includes a theoretical framework on how, through the development of social capital, BRGs can have a mediating effect in supporting organizational performance. In addition, a framework illustrating how the development of self-efficacy contributes to individual BRG member performance is also described in the discussion section.

The research methodology used in this study is a mixed method design. “Mixed methods research provides a way to harness strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research” (Creswell & Clark, 2018: 13). The qualitative focus used a Participative Action Research framework (A/R), supplemented with a quantitative, quasi-experimental design and Grounded Theory (GT). Analysis was conducted at the unit level context (APA BRG), within a global MNC. As a byproduct of the A/R, quantitative data was used to perform a quasi-experiment. The data was in the

form of key performance indicators (e.g., sales volume, sales revenue, gross profit), used to demonstrate organizational performance improvements. As the author of this research, I participated directly and inevitably influenced the interventions made. Given this context, I acted as a catalyst in both pinpointing the problem(s) as well as identifying solutions to demonstrate business growth goals. In line with previous A/R designs, I acted as “both a participant and an agent of change” (Lorenzo, 2010:89) throughout the process.

The remainder of this dissertation is structured as follows. The next chapter review’s the existing literature defining BRGs and the theories of social capital and self-efficacy. The third chapter discusses the method of research applied in this study. A detailed definition, origin, and application of these design methods will be covered. The fourth chapter is the A/R section, chronicling the entire problem-solving cycle. The fifth chapter contains the findings and analysis of the quasi-experimental design and the Grounded Theory results. The final chapter contains the discussion, highlighting the implications this research has for both industry and academia.

Grupos de Recursos Empresariales: apoyo a los resultados organizativos e individuales mediante el desarrollo del capital social y la autoeficacia

RESUMEN

Los Grupos de Recursos Empresariales (BRG por sus siglas en inglés) son redes sociales dentro de las organizaciones que proporcionan apoyo y oportunidades de establecer redes para sus empleados. Establecidos en parte para promover un entorno de trabajo inclusivo, los BRG buscan cumplir la misión y los objetivos principales de la organización, aprovechando la diversidad de su base de miembros. (Kaplan, et.al, 2009). Los BRG proporcionan oportunidades de rendimiento fundamentales para sus miembros. Las oportunidades de rendimiento son de dos tipos: individuales y organizativas. Las oportunidades de rendimiento individual se dan a través del desarrollo de la carrera y el liderazgo (Friedman y Craig, 2004), el voluntariado a través de la divulgación comunitaria y la concienciación cultural dentro de la empresa. A su vez, las oportunidades de rendimiento organizativo se presentan en forma de una combinación de desarrollo de nuevos negocios, marketing multicultural y crecimiento de primera línea del negocio.

La investigación empírica sobre los BRG, su eficacia en los miembros individuales o su impacto en las organizaciones ha sido muy reducida (Welbourne y McLaughlin, 2013). El propósito de este estudio es llenar esa laguna en la investigación demostrando cómo los BRG pueden afectar al rendimiento organizativo e individual. Esta investigación demuestra cómo los BRG, a través del desarrollo del capital social, pueden actuar como mediadores, tendiendo un puente en la relación entre las partes interesadas internas y externas. El desarrollo de la confianza a través de la autoeficacia (Bandura, 1978) subraya el valor obtenido por los miembros del equipo de los BRG. Este estudio sigue a un BRG estadounidense de origen asiático y del Pacífico dentro de una corporación multinacional (MNC por sus siglas en inglés), describiendo su enfoque para mejorar el rendimiento individual y organizativo. En este contexto, el rendimiento organizativo es sinónimo de crecimiento empresarial (es decir, ventas, volumen, beneficio bruto) dentro de la empresa. El rendimiento individual es sinónimo de alcanzar la confianza a través del aprendizaje en el trabajo y la realización de tareas.

Los métodos de investigación utilizados en este estudio fueron un diseño de método mixto. Desde una perspectiva cualitativa, se utilizó un diseño de Investigación Acción Participativa (IAP). Como líder directo e investigador principal, desempeñé un papel de catalizador del cambio dentro del BRG, al asociarme con las partes interesadas internas y externas para influir, observar y reflexionar sobre el proceso para lograr el rendimiento de la organización. También se utilizó la Teoría Fundamentada para convertir los sentimientos de los participantes en temas emergentes extraídos de la experiencia de IAP. Desde la perspectiva de los métodos cuantitativos, se utilizó un diseño cuasi-experimental. Se utilizaron medidas clave de rendimiento empresarial para demostrar el antes y el después que puede tener el desarrollo del capital social tanto dentro como fuera de la organización. Este enfoque de método mixto ofrece una visión robusta y convincente de cómo los BRG pueden influir en el rendimiento organizativo e individual.

CAPÍTULO 1. INTRODUCCIÓN

Los BRG “son comunidades dentro de una empresa que se organizan en torno a las circunstancias similares y los objetivos comunes de los empleados” (Douglas, 2008: 12). Las características principales de los BRG son el apoyo social, la influencia en el crecimiento profesional y la creación de una plataforma de aprendizaje y desarrollo en el lugar de trabajo. Los BRG también se conocen como grupos de afinidad, redes de recursos para empleados y grupos de recursos para empleados. En aras de la coherencia, en este documento se utilizará el término BRG. A finales de la década de 1960, los BRG se crearon para impulsar las exigencias de Diversidad e Inclusión (D+I), tales como la creación de un entorno de trabajo justo y equitativo, mediante la creación de redes sociales entre personas con intereses y orígenes similares. A lo largo de los años, los BRG han evolucionado para asumir objetivos organizativos más amplios, como el alcance comunitario, el desarrollo profesional y la innovación empresarial (Welbourne et al., 2015). En la actualidad, las MNC aspiran a demostrar cómo sus BRG pueden convertirse en un verdadero recurso empresarial. No se ha realizado ninguna investigación hasta la fecha que demuestre beneficios tangibles de rendimiento organizativo derivados de los BRG (Welbourne y McLaughlin, 2013). Esta laguna en la literatura es el principal punto de atención de esta investigación.

1.1 Construir relaciones internas y externas

Históricamente, el objetivo principal de los BRG ha sido desarrollar su base de miembros. Este proceso de desarrollo se basa en métodos formales e informales para crear relaciones internas. Los enfoques formales incluyen eventos de *networking*, que promueven un sentido de comunidad y pertenencia. El aprendizaje y desarrollo (A+D) es otro enfoque formal. El A+D puede centrarse en las habilidades básicas de *networking*, las habilidades de presentación, el desarrollo del liderazgo y la sagacidad empresarial en general (Green, 2018). Los miembros del BRG o los oradores invitados dentro

de la empresa ofrecen seminarios para educar y desarrollar a los participantes del BRG. La planificación de eventos clave del BRG es otra vía para el desarrollo personal y la creación de relaciones. Los voluntarios del BRG asumen papeles vitales en la ejecución estratégica y táctica de la celebración de eventos en toda la organización. Estas acciones requieren la planificación de proyectos, la colaboración con los miembros del equipo del BRG para ejecutar las tareas del programa, la asociación con los altos ejecutivos que defienden los programas y la interrelación con la comunidad para solicitar la participación en los eventos. Las habilidades adquiridas a través de estos métodos formales preparan a los miembros del BRG para ser líderes, y para hacerse cargo de su propia trayectoria y desarrollo profesional. La exposición a diferentes líderes ayuda a crear capital social y amplía las relaciones de los miembros del BRG, tanto horizontal como verticalmente en la empresa. De manera informal, los BRG ofrecen oportunidades de tutoría para ayudar a entrenar, desarrollar y guiar a los miembros del equipo (Friedman, 1999). A menudo, los líderes de alto nivel dentro de la organización proporcionan este tipo de apoyo, lo que refuerza aún más las relaciones positivas que contribuyen al crecimiento de los miembros del BRG. La creación de relaciones fuera de la organización se ha llevado a cabo normalmente a través de actividades de participación comunitaria y de voluntariado planificadas por el BRG. Las oportunidades de dar charlas como invitados, las mesas redondas y la participación en banquetes locales de recaudación de fondos simbolizan un aspecto de la creación de relaciones y capital social. Otro aspecto de la creación de relaciones fuera de la organización es el desarrollo empresarial. La creación de relaciones para el desarrollo de negocios no es un enfoque típico de los BRG, pero es una oportunidad potencial y sin explotar dentro de las organizaciones. Dado que los miembros de los BRG se identifican y asimilan con sus compañeros, basándose en valores culturales, laborales o comunes y en experiencias pasadas (Welbourne y McLaughlin, 2013), los BRG pueden aprovechar esos mismos antecedentes para establecer relaciones con clientes potenciales. Estas relaciones pueden empezar por establecer un terreno común. En un entorno de clientes multiculturales, el terreno común empieza por

compartir costumbres culturales o sociales similares, con quienes tienen una característica o experiencia vital compartida. Establecer la confianza basada en estas similitudes es el primer paso para construir una relación transparente. La creación de capital social, tanto a nivel interno como externo, desempeña un papel fundamental en la consecución del objetivo del BRG de los estadounidenses de origen asiático y del Pacífico (APA por sus siglas en inglés) de apoyar el rendimiento de la organización. Utilizando los datos de los clientes potenciales, que incluyen atributos del censo de EE.UU., se puede segmentar a los clientes potenciales en función de su origen étnico, canal de ventas y ubicación. En este estudio de IAP, el BRG de APA estableció una relación con los clientes con los que se identifican y que representan su etnia (por ejemplo, chino, coreano, indio, etc.). El objetivo no es vender información sobre precios u ofertas de productos como un vendedor tradicional, sino establecer una relación basada en puntos comunes y similitudes culturales. A través del ciclo de vida de aprendizaje reflexivo de IAP, el BRG estableció relaciones con organizaciones comerciales asiáticas que representan a miles de miembros de ascendencia común. El BRG identificó oportunidades para desarrollar el capital social a partir de los vínculos existentes en su base de miembros y con otros líderes de la MNC. El ciclo de vida de la IAP abarca un periodo de veinte meses. Este periodo es necesario, ya que permite a los participantes experimentar, aprender, reflexionar y mejorar sus experiencias a medida que desarrollan sus relaciones. Por tanto, este ciclo de IAP se ajusta a los criterios utilizados en los estudios longitudinales (Shadish, Cook y Campbell, 2001). En el capítulo de análisis, reflexionaré sobre la importancia crítica del tiempo necesario para formular eficazmente el surgimiento del constructo y las teorías que se desarrollan, y cómo la investigación futura puede beneficiarse de un enfoque de diseño longitudinal.

Esta tesis incluye un marco teórico sobre cómo, a través del desarrollo del capital social, los BRG pueden tener un efecto mediador en el apoyo al rendimiento de la organización. Además, en la sección de análisis se describe un marco que ilustra cómo el desarrollo de la autoeficacia contribuye al rendimiento individual de los miembros de los BRG.

La metodología de investigación utilizada en este estudio es un diseño de método mixto. “La investigación de métodos mixtos proporciona una manera de aprovechar las fortalezas que compensan las debilidades de la investigación cuantitativa y cualitativa” (Creswell & Clark, 2018: 13). El enfoque cualitativo utilizará un marco de Investigación Acción Participativa (IAP), complementado con un diseño cuantitativo, cuasi-experimental. El análisis se llevó a cabo en el contexto a nivel de unidad (BRG APA), dentro de una MNC global. Como subproducto de la IAP, se utilizaron datos cuantitativos para realizar un cuasi-experimento. Los datos adoptaron la forma de indicadores clave de rendimiento (por ejemplo, volumen de ventas, ingresos por ventas, beneficio bruto), utilizados para demostrar las mejoras del rendimiento organizativo. Como autor de esta investigación, participo directamente e influyo de forma inevitable en las intervenciones que se realizan. Teniendo en cuenta este contexto, actué como catalizador tanto en la determinación del problema o problemas como en la identificación de soluciones para demostrar los objetivos de crecimiento empresarial. En consonancia con los diseños anteriores de IAP, actué como “participante y agente de cambio” (Lorenzo, 2010:89) durante todo el proceso.

El resto de esta propuesta se estructura de la siguiente manera. En la siguiente sección se revisa la literatura existente que define los BRG y las teorías del capital social y la autoeficacia. En la tercera sección se analiza el método de investigación aplicado en este estudio. Se tratará la definición detallada, el origen y la aplicación de estos métodos de diseño. La cuarta sección es el capítulo de IAP, en el que se relata todo el ciclo de resolución de problemas. La quinta sección contiene las conclusiones de esta investigación, ilustrando los resultados del diseño cuasi-experimental, y el análisis de la teoría fundamentada. La última sección contiene el análisis, destacando las implicaciones que esta investigación tiene para la industria y el mundo académico.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Business Resource Groups (BRGs)

BRGs are the extension of corporate D&I programs (Catalyst, 2014). BRGs provide an open community for individuals who share common demographics that may be race, ethnicity, gender, or social identity (Kaplan et al., 2009). The byproduct of BRGs can benefit both the individual members and the organization (Welbourne & McLaughlin, 2013). Members can range from a small handful to several thousand, and they can be globally distributed (Mercer, 2011).

BRGs were originally established in companies, during the height of the race riots in the 1960s. The Black Caucus Group was formed at Xerox Corporation to promote racial equality in the workplace (Douglas, 2008). As the Black Caucus progressed, other organizations began to institute similar employee networks to address a wide array of diversity and inclusion needs, ranging from cultural awareness and social networking to professional development and workplace inclusion (Cencki, Zimmeran, & Bircan, 2019). Over the last several decades, MNCs have transformed their BRGs to a facilitator of employee development. Companies such as GE, Bank of America, American Airlines (Mercer, 2011), and many others, have embedded BRGs as a platform for employee growth. What is unique about BRGs is that those who choose to lead or chair these groups do it beyond their day jobs. The effort is discretionary, they do not have to do it, they want to (Douglas, 2008). Budgets allocated to run BRGs are typically limited, and the planning and work activities rest on the shoulders of an army of volunteers (Jennifer Brown Consulting, 2010; Singh, Vinnicombe, & Kumra, 2006).

Organizations typically require BRGs to create a statement of purpose, develop a formal charter, establish a business plan, and “contain a leadership structure, and be open to anyone in the company” (Friedman, 1999: 794). Most BRG goals are to cultivate and ideally accelerate the career path of its

participants through social networking, knowledge sharing, and leadership development for the member base (Friedman & Craig, 2004).

BRGs are characterized as having formal governance processes (Kaplan et al., 2009), yet they are relatively horizontal (McGrath & Sparks, 2005; Van Aken, Monetta, & Sink, 1994) and are run by committee members (Bowie & Bronte-Tinke, 2006; Friedman & Craig, 2004; McGrath & Sparks, 2005; Van Aken et al., 1994). Example committees can include events and planning, professional development, strategy and innovation, and communications.

BRG leaders inherently work to engage and reload members and potential new members; they also focus on community outreach and development (MacGillivray & Golden, 2007). In addition to the social and community development, BRGs focus on professional development through peer mentoring, senior leadership exposure, leadership skills development, and transparent communications (McGrath & Sparks, 2005).

Ashong-Lamprey (2016) extends on the work of Githens and Aragon (2009) by creating a typology of the roles BRGs fulfill within an organization. Using social identity theory as the backdrop, Ashong-Lamprey identifies 'Business Resource' as one of the identities that BRGs can play within the organization.

A well-grounded typology of BRGs was presented by Welbourne and McLaughlin's research across 1,700 employees in two different companies (2013). The typology identified three major types of BRGs: social cause-centered, professional-centered, and attribute-centered BRGs. This typology establishes the foundation for the evolution of BRGs over time. Social cause centered BRGs focus on what the company can do to help society. The emphasis is how BRGs can be a conduit for that support. Professional BRGs draw employees who are interested in personal development and on-the-job growth. Attribute-centered BRGs attract members who share common characteristics, whether it be race, ethnicity, gender, military veterans, etc. The attribute-centered groups are the most common, and offer

a platform for cultural awareness, and sensitivity to the needs, and experiences of the BRG member base (Welbourne & McLaughlin, 2013). For this research, the APA BRG within this MNC shares characteristics within all groups listed in the typology: attribute-centered; social cause-centered and professional-centered. Throughout the A/R cycle, activities described will illustrate the convergence of these three groupings.

2.1.1 BRG theoretical underpinnings

BRG empirical studies have primarily focused on outcomes achieved, underscoring how participation in these groups can have a positive effect on an individual's career goals, D&I objectives, and Employee Equal Opportunity (EEO) policies (Welbourne & McLaughlin, 2013). Given BRGs are a nascent phenomenon, most research has been "informational," rather than theory and construct-building. The reality is BRGs are more popular with practitioners than with academics (Mercer 2011; Jennifer Brown Consulting, 2010; Catalyst, 2014). Academic literature has been anemic (Dennissen, Benschop, & van den Brin, 2016; Friedman et al., 1999). In a seminal, comprehensive BRG literature review, Welbourne, Rolf, & Schlachter identified over 71 initial articles relevant to BRGs (2017). Out of the seventy-one articles, thirty-three were academic, drawing on a small handful of theories and constructs. The majority (forty percent) of the academic BRG research focus has been on the impact of lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgender (LGBT) and/or women's BRGs in helping to reduce discriminatory and bias practices and finding a collective voice through the process (Creed & Scully, 2002; Singh, et.al, 2006; Colgan & McKearney 2012; O'Neil, Hopkins, and Sullivan, 2011; Briscoe & Safford; 2010).

However, there has been a significant amount of literature which highlights motivating factors for joining BRGs, and why people choose to actively participate. For example, Friedman identified the value social networks have in driving career success, and how BRGs can accelerate social network development (1999). Following the tenets of social identity theory (SIT) members are more likely to join based on the similarities and how well they identify to the composition of the BRGs. These same

members found satisfaction in participating and aligning with the work of the BRG (Friedman and Craig, 2004; Welbourne & McLaughlin, 2013). Like the satisfaction indicators derived from Friedman and Craig's work, a recent study showed the work engagement level of BRG members is significantly higher, as working toward a common goal helps to invigorate energy and a positive inclusive work experience (Cencki et al., 2019). McGrath and Sparks (2005) posit that creating social capital through BRGs can enable value creation throughout the manufacturing supply chain.

Welbourne et. al. have proposed that BRGs can be "safe zones for innovation" (2015: 42), as employees can experiment and test out new ideas, without fear of political or hierarchical processes that normally impede innovative practices. In this case, BRGs can play the role as a community of practice (CoP), with a proactive and focused change agenda. This purpose driven approach extends beyond the typical BRG innovations which take place as a matter of convenience (Welbourne & McLaughlin, 2013).

Each of these studies highlight positive outcomes BRGs can have on their employee's experience, yet there has not been an empirical research study which demonstrates the positive, measurable outcomes a BRG can have on organizational performance (Welbourne & McLaughlin, 2013). While social capital as a theory has been identified as an enabler for BRGs to create value with suppliers (McGrath & Sparks 2005), there has been no formal test or empirical research to directly link social capital development, through BRGs, and BRGs to organizational performance outcomes. In addition, while social learning theory has been established as a benefit for BRGs through creation of communities of practice (Green, 2018), there has been no study that has measured the outcome participating in formal or informal BRG learning activities may have on individual performance.

This research study makes a significant contribution to the existing BRG literature by demonstrating how a BRG develops social capital, how that social capital can be leveraged to build relationships with both internal and external stakeholders (i.e., potential customers), and how those

relationships can lead to significant organizational performance outcomes. In addition, the development of self-confidence, and the emergence of self-efficacy and its relationship with individual performance growth was explored in detail.

In the following section, social capital and self-efficacy are defined. I then propose a research design that measures the mediating effect BRGs can have on organizational performance, and how the development of self-efficacy can have a positive impact on individual team member performance.

2.3. Social Capital

The lens of social capital had been proposed by Friedman and Craig (2004) to be a foundational framework that underscores the structure of BRGs. Using this lens as a starting point, I will set out to pinpoint the relationship that a BRG has on Organizational Outcomes.

Social capital as a framework has been in existence since the late 1970s. Under sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) research, he put focus on power acquired through social capital, and the social relationship improvement that is a byproduct of the individuals focusing on their own self-interest.

Bourdieu's concept of "capital" goes beyond the monetized version of economic capital. Capital can be viewed as either tangible or intangible (Anheier, Gerhards, & Romo, 1995).

Bourdieu distinguishes between three general types of capital: "Economic capital refers to monetary income as well as other financial resources and assets and finds its institutional expression in property rights. Cultural capital exists in various forms. It includes long-standing habits acquired in the socialization process, the accumulation of valued cultural objects, cultural, moral, and formal educational qualifications, and training. Social capital is the sum of the actual and potential resources that can be mobilized through membership in social networks of actors and organizations." (Anheier et al., 1995: 53)

Robert Putnam (1995) offers a variation on the theory of social capital. His view of social capital deals with common beliefs and integrating across social boundaries, built with an underlying foundation

of trust. Social capital fosters the flow of useful information, thus leading to an exchange that can bear economic gains.

Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998), fuse the two researcher's theoretical underpinnings of social capital, by establishing a model built on the following dimensions: structural, cognitive, and relational. Structural dimensions concentrate on the network ties and configuration of existing relationships in each organization. These ties, whether strong or weak (Granovetter, 1973), can lead to exchange of information or resources that feed into the development of social capital. Social capital helps to accelerate the ability to gather information across channels, thus reducing the time required to ascertain that information (Coleman, 1988). The cognitive dimension lends itself to the cultural and symbolic capital described by Bourdieu. These are 'shared codes' or 'shared languages,' and 'shared narratives.' Shared codes and languages allow for a simple form of two-way communication. Understanding the colloquialisms and context in each code or language lends itself to a better experience in building a relationship across boundaries (Berger, 1966). Shared narratives are derived from the common stories and metaphors that each party can relate to. These stories and metaphors can help build the exchange of tacit knowledge, thus leading to an exchange of learning and practice (Orr, 1990). The relational dimension is based on trust. Extending on Putnam's research, the relational dimension poses that in high trust relationships people are more likely to share and cooperate fully within their social exchanges. (Putnam et.al., 1993)

Nahapiet & Ghosal believe norms exist when "the socially defined right to control an action is held not by the actor but by others, representing a degree of consensus in the social system" (1998: 255). Norms that are based on cooperation provide a solid platform for growth and development of intellectual capital. Obligations can be described as a commitment that can be fulfilled as some point in the future. Coleman (1990) views obligations as a form of a credit possessed by person X, that can be exchanged for some reciprocal act by person Y. "The notion that there is no such thing as a free lunch

represents a commonly held view that exchange brings with it expectations about future obligations.” (Nahapiet & Ghosal, 1998: 255). Fairtlough (1994) uncovers the significance between the obligations individuals develop in either a personal or professional environment both between and within organizations. When individuals find a common likeness and can relate to characteristics of another group, this is the process of identification. Developing a membership in a specific group leads to individuals taking “the values or standards of other individuals or groups as a comparative frame of reference” (Merton, 1968: 288).

Nahapiet & Ghoshal’s three dimensions and their core tenets work in tandem to produce an exchange of intellectual capital. Intellectual capital can be defined as “a social artifact and that knowledge and meaning are always embedded in a social context-both created and sustained through ongoing relationships in such collectivities” (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998: 246). This form of social capital leads to both monetary and non-monetary gains, but ultimately forges a stronger relationship between actors in the system.

This dissertation leverages Nahapiet & Ghoshal’s three-dimensional model of social capital as a framework and emphasizes the exchange that takes place between actors in a system.

2.4 Self-Efficacy

In 1978 Albert Bandura coined the theory of self-efficacy, a subset of social learning theory. Self-efficacy posits that people can demonstrate self-confidence through successful mastery of task performance (Bandura, 1978). The development of self-efficacy is gained through informational “cues” which promote the learning experience.

The first cue is performance success, or enactive mastery. This cue, defined as a performance accomplishment that has been replicated, is the most powerful of the four cues (Bandura, 1978). Through incremental accomplishments, the individual’s performance is reinforced, leading to successful repetition of the same or similar behaviors.

The second cue is vicarious experience or learning by watching. When people or groups role model a particular behavior or task, individuals can learn from their technique, approach, and even failure points of what not to do. The most powerful takeaway is when the modeler can succeed, after a complex task. The success helps to reinforce the experience as something attainable, after applying true grit (Bandura 1977).

The third cue of self-efficacy is social (verbal) persuasion. Through social reinforcement, recognition, and other forms of verbal 'nudging,' individuals can gain confidence and self-belief to try performing something that they are encouraged to perform (Bandura, 1982).

The fourth cue of self-efficacy is emotional or physiological arousal. In this instance, individuals experiencing anxiety or stress can be affected either positively or negatively when performing tasks. This is the least powerful cue, yet it could play a factor on individual performance.

Self-efficacy can predict both past and future performance (Locke & Latham, 1984).

A significant part of this research will rely on the self-efficacy and the conditions which call upon the four cues that help support performance. These details will be explored during the analysis and findings chapters.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Mixed Method Overview

Mixed methods research is an approach which blends components of qualitative research and quantitative research to give a holistic view of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Clark, 2018). There are many variants in conducting mixed methods research. Creswell and Clark (2018) propose core mixed method designs with various sequences. Designs can begin with a quantitative approach, and end with qualitative. Other designs can start with a qualitative and end with a quantitative. Complex mixed methods design has become more prevalent. These methods include experimental designs, mixing both quantitative and qualitative, mixed methods using case studies, mixed methods which focus on the evaluation of an intervention, and mixed methods leveraging an A/R design (Creswell & Clark, 2018). The research methodology used for this study emulates Creswell & Clark's mixed method A/R design.

The procedure in this design includes:

1. Identifying the problem and stating the theoretical perspective.
2. Conducting the data collection to involve and honor participant(s).
3. Introducing an analysis that highlights the needs of the participants, the community, and the organization.
4. Recommending change that needs to be made.
5. Making the change.

Using these procedures as a guideline, three methods were used in this study.

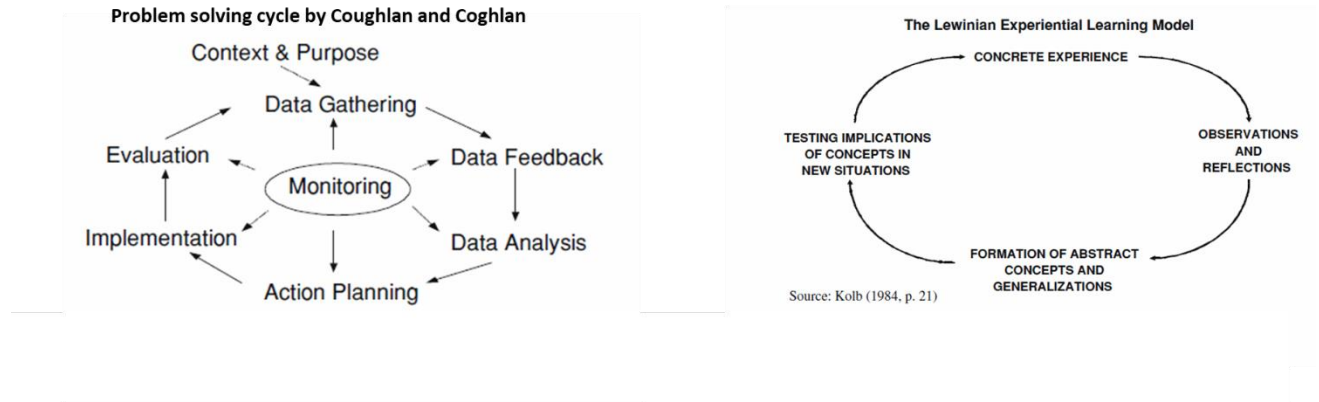
The core design is an A/R framework. As the primary methodology, the A/R framework was followed through the beginning, middle, and end of this dissertation. The quantitative methods part of this mixed methods design employs a quasi-experimental design using quantitative performance data. The quasi-experiment is significant, as the results of this method demonstrate the organizational performance outcomes, in the form of sales, profit, and volume improvements. Furthermore, it demonstrates the value BRGs can create, validating the positive effect D&I programs can have on

business performance. Finally, a combination of classical Grounded Theory and the recent variation of Critical Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Belfrage & Hauf, 2017) were used during and after the A/R cycle. Using semi-structured interviews, information was both inductively and deductively analyzed to identify both emerging and existing constructs which tie back to organizational theories. During the interviews, participants were asked questions (See appendix I) regarding the experience during the process, and the effect these activities were having on the company, the external stakeholders, the internal stakeholders, and themselves. In total, fifteen hours of interviews were recorded. The recordings were immediately transcribed into eighty-three pages of notes. The information captured during the interviews, coupled with my memos identifying similar experiences and concepts captured during those conversations, translated to 539 sentiments. The first interval of questions was for A/R cycles 1–6. This represented the initial start-up of the marketplace initiative, a process in which the BRG conceived a plan to help the company grow their business. The second interval of questions was for A/R cycles 7–9, representing the initial engagement with an Asian Trade Organization (ATO), through the signing of a new Customer Marketing Agreement (CMA). The third interval of questions focused on the participants experience after the A/R study was complete. The interview questions allowed time for deep reflection on the experience and sustainability of what was learned and applied. The comments captured and transcribed after each interview were immediately entered into Microsoft Excel for detailed analysis. Using a blend of the grounded theory method outlined by Strauss & Corbin (1990) and, I used a three-step process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. This approach facilitated the identification of context as it relates to extant organizational theories. I then performed a second iteration of the analysis by uploading the Excel file into N-Vivo version 12. Using the node structure within N-Vivo, I re-assessed the participant sentiments through the open coding process to ensure thoroughness of key themes that pertain to the research questions.

Lorenzo characterizes “an action research project as emergent. The research tenets emerge from the unfolding of a series of events during the problem-solving lifecycle” (Lorenzo, 2010: 89). The A/R process is reflective by nature (Mills, 2003), which allows the researcher to observe key events as they unfold. As part of the reflective exercise, using the pronoun “I” is an important part of the epistemological practice (Whitehead, 2000). Throughout the A/R cycle, first person language will be used to best capture the self-reflective moments in time. In this research, I explore and execute the different actions the APA BRG took to positively influence business relationships and performance outcomes. The results of the reflective A/R process provide a rich context that helps to explain the outcomes derived from the second part of this mixed method research, the quasi-experimental design. Using inferential statistics, the quasi-experiment compares the results of the group under study to that of a control group. The final part of this mixed method process will rely on the grounded theory (GT) method. The GT approach provides a salient and effective coding procedure to categorize the thematic responses during interviews, and to ultimately identify both emerging themes and existing theories (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017) which help to explain the phenomenon.

Two discrete routines are operationalized when conducting A/R. “The first routine is based on the six-step problem-solving model developed by Coughlan and Coughlan (see figure 1). The second routine is based on the fundamental learning process developed by Kurt Lewin and later adapted by Kolb as the “Lewinian Experiential Learning Model” (see figure 1) (Kolb, 1984: 21). This approach allows researchers to reflect on the situation, what is unfolding, and how the results can be interpreted both from a practical and theoretical standpoint.” (Lorenzo, 2010: 89).

Figure 1: Action Research Methods



3.2 Learning Cycle and Theory Generation

Applying the Lewinian learning model allows the researcher to reflect on all variables which may contribute to the problem at hand. (Lorenzo, 2010). Through critical reflection, the researcher can witness the sequence of events which explain certain phenomena unfolding, generating the interest of others to interpret and absorb the new knowledge being created. Through this self-reflection, the researcher can extend theory from an experience. (Coughlan & Coghlan, 2002).

The aim of this research design is to participate in the situation such that I can help drive the solutions which leads to knowledge creation. The A/R methodology allows for this rich, experiential outcome, which illustrates how BRGs can have a significant impact on the business. The theoretical framework goes beyond the general understanding of BRGs as a network that find common ground through social identity theory, but rather provides a rich, performance-based context with a data driven outcome. To address the research aims, I develop a theoretical, cross-disciplinary framework utilizing

the organizational theory of social capital, within the human resource discipline. Specifically, the research questions to be addressed are:

1. How can BRGs be used to enable organizational performance and growth, demonstrating business impact?
2. How can BRGs enable individual team member confidence and professional growth?
3. How do BRGs build relationships with potential customers who they can identify with?
4. How can BRGs connect internal partners with the external community, to build mutually beneficial relationships, subsequently improving organizational performance?

The A/R approach was conducted at the unit level context (an APA BRG), within a global MNC. As the author of this study, I was directly inside the situation and inevitably influenced the actions made to drive change. As a result, I acted as a change agent (Coughlan & Coughlan, 2002), pinpointing the opportunities the BRG could take to support organizational performance. A/R affords researchers the opportunity to act in solving problems, trying different counter measures, and reflecting on the efficacy of those solutions. This is characterized in the problem-solving cycle. Once the actions have been implemented within a given situation, a time of reflection is taken where the researcher along with the participants, assess the results, and then generate or extend an existing theory to the phenomenon which has unfolded. Therefore, the output contributes to both practice (solving a problem) and research (extending theoretical implications).

In addition to this A/R method of inquiry, a quasi-experimental research design was conducted. Quasi-experiments are especially useful over long periods of time, and can be conducted using control groups (Derue, Hollenbeck, et.al., 2012). While the A/R will generate new knowledge through the participative and reflexive methodology, the quasi-experiment illustrates the effect the changes made during the A/R trials had on organizational outcomes. Using the concept of a cohort design (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Derue, Hollenbeck, et.al., 2012) I captured the before and after performance outcomes of two regional chapters of the same ATO, or cohort. The longitudinal design promoted a rich 'difference

in difference' comparison allowing for a salient analysis over a one-year period. One ATO chapter was considered the experimental group, while the other ATO chapter functioned as a control group.

The following section provides context into the theoretical underpinnings and practical application of the methodologies.

3.3 Action Research (A/R)

In the 1940s, psychologist Kurt Lewin was forced to flee Nazi-occupied Germany and take refuge in the United States. Lewin's career was rooted in social psychology and, as such, his interest lay in social change and figuring out ways to promote it. Lewin is generally thought to be the person who created the methodology called action research by providing it substance as a legitimate research method. (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). In A/R, Lewin proposed a method where a researcher could develop an experiment which is both holistic and substantive in a social situation, with the intention of accomplishing a specific objective.

Greenwood and Levin (2007) characterize A/R as a "set of self-consciously collaborative and democratic strategies for generating knowledge and designing action in which trained experts in social and other forms of research and local stakeholders work together. The research focus is chosen collaboratively among the local stakeholders and the action researchers, and the relationships among the participants are organized as joint learning processes. A/R focuses on doing "with" rather than doing "for" the participants of the study. Credit is given to the participants for providing their reflective experiences that can be both complex and rich in data" (Greenwood & Levin, 2007: 1).

Greenwood and Levin (2007) define A/R as "social research carried out by a team that encompasses a professional action researcher and the members of an organization, community, or network ("stakeholders") who are seeking to improve the participants' situation" (Greenwood & Levin, 2007: 1). Extensive participation is promoted in A/R studies, leading to a productive and useful outcome for the stakeholders in the study. Through an organic partnership, the A/R researcher and the

participants pinpoint the situation, problem to be solved, or phenomena to be analyzed, and together they generate learning and pertinent knowledge, administer social research techniques, implement change, interpret the results, and then repeat the same cycle. A key tenet of A/R is the belief that professional action researchers capture, synthesize, and use “complex knowledge continuously in everyday life.” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007: 4).

A/R refers to the intersection of three ingredients: action, research, and participation. Unless all three ingredients are combined, the method may be effective, but it would not be considered A/R. The sole purpose of an A/R strategy is to act and create new knowledge, or “apply existing knowledge in a different context, and ultimately drive social change” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007: 103). The participants and stakeholders of the research can control their own destiny, continuously improving their knowledge, and doing so within a more maintainable and impartial setting. The following further defines the key ingredients to A/R:

- 1 Action. “A/R is participatory because A/R aims to alter the initial situation of the group, organization, or community in the direction of a more self-managing, liberated, and sustainable state,” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007: 4). The liberated state can be defined differently across participants and practitioners. Self-realization is key, and in some instances practitioners view this as a liberated state of being. The occurrence of A/R takes place whenever the participants of an organization are actively part of a research study.
- 2 Research. Research, in the form of self-reflection and learning, adds considerable value in the creation of new knowledge or the enhancement of existing knowledge, be it in the form of theories, conceptual models, or new methodologies applied in a cross-disciplinary context. A/R is one of the most influential techniques to generate salient research that can eventually have general application in theory development.
- 3 Participation. A/R includes specialized researchers who act as implementers and educators of team members embedded in local communities or organizations (Chandler & Torbert, 2003). Together these groups of individuals create the A/R plan, develop the knowledge required to change the situation, and apply the results in real time. A/R is a participatory process, allowing all members to be involved and take ownership of the process.

3.4 Quasi-Experimental Design

As a byproduct of the A/R study, quantitative data sets in the form of sales volume, revenue, and profit margins are analyzed. This data, also referred to as key performance indicators (KPIs), was available for a group of customers represented by an Asian Trade Organization (ATO). These customers benefited from interventions born from the A/R process. In addition, a data set from a group of customers from the same ATO, but in a different chapter, or region of the country, was analyzed as a control group. Access to this quantitative data set is serendipitous as the intention of the A/R research method is meant to follow the qualitative life cycle of direct application and immediate learning of interventions, drawing inductive insights from the reflective process. The quasi-experimental design results help demonstrate a relationship between the independent (BRG involvement in supporting the business) and dependent variables (sales, volume, profit margins).

Many variables could have a direct influence on the cause-and-effect relationship which lead to significant performance outcomes, but the challenge is to demonstrate how each of these variables are connected or have a direct relationship. Causal relationships are not definitively the silver bullet reasoning behind why events may occur, but rather provide a higher probability that the outcome may occur (Pearl, 2010). To varying gradations, all causal relationships depend on the context of the situation, so generalizing the results of experiments is always a concern. Results can be rationalized through a counterfactual model. A counterfactual is something that is opposed to circumstance (Campbell and Stanley, 1963). In an experiment, observations of what happens when people receive an intervention is captured, Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (2001) point out that “the counterfactual is knowledge of what would have happened to those same people if they simultaneously had not received

treatment. An effect is the difference between what did happen and what would have happened.” (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001:5). Quasi-experiments are like traditional experiments in that they test causal relationships between independent and dependent variables. Using a control group method, Derue et al. tested the efficacy of after-event reviews in the development of leaders, using a quasi-experiment over a nine-month period (Derue, et al., 2012). In addition, using paired t-test in quasi-experiments provides a salient procedure to compare pre and post interventions. (Shardell, et. al., 2007) “The presence of control groups along with pre and posttest measures can support a counterfactual inference about what would have happened in the absence of the independent variable” (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001:5). Researchers using this method of inquiry must review the alternative explanations, determine which are feasible, and then use effective design and measures to analyze whether each of the variables are acting in a way that may clarify any practical effect. Through the robust A/R part of this dissertation, the bridge between cause and effect the BRG has on organizational performance, helps to explain the phenomenon of BRGs and the development and leverage of social capital.

3.5 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory (GT) is an inductive approach to qualitative analysis. A positivist view which does not begin with a theory, but through an iterative approach, that is ‘grounded’ in the specific case or setting under analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The GT movement began with a disdained view of the quantitative focus on verification, and the gross neglect of theory building. Several decades later Strauss and Corbin (1990) enhanced GT with a structured approach to data collection and analysis. They systematically introduced “a very detailed outline of data analysis, with emphasis on ongoing validation” (Timonen, et.al. 2018: 2). In recent years, different strands of Grounded Theory have been introduced (Timonen, et.al., 2018). Where Classical GT characterizes the researcher as a “detached, yet reflexive observer” (Timonen, et.al., 2018: 3)., in Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT), the participant and researcher are “active” in constructing new knowledge (Charmaz, 2014). In this sense, CGT is an

interpretive view of the world around the participants, with a more subjective view of the context under study. Another strand of GT is the Critical Realist perspective, or Critical Grounded Theory (Belfrage & Hauf, 2018). “Critical grounded theory begins with critical observations and/ or experiences of the critical issues prior to the study and seeks to enact change”. (Timonen, et.al., 2018: 3). The basic tenets focus on “retroduction”, the process by which the researcher explores preexisting theories and knowledge, straddling both an inductive and deductive line of inquiry. To arrive at possible explanations for the phenomenon, the critical GT “relies on analogies with already known phenomena and on pre-existing theories as cognitive raw material” (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017: 255). Suddaby (2006) highlighted the recognition of Strauss and Corbin’s view of GT, and the opportunity to relax the strict tenets of classical GT (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). “Strauss and Corbin noted that induction had been overemphasized in grounded theory research. They observed that whenever researchers conceptualize data, they are engaging in deduction and that effective grounded theory requires “an interplay between induction and deduction (as in all science)” (Suddaby, 2006: 639). Given the flexibility in the various methods of analysis introduced in each GT strand, I will use a combination of the classical GT approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) leveraging their structured and rigorous data collection technique. In addition, I will leverage techniques described within the critical GT approach (Belfrage & Hauf 2018), to explore existing theories, using a deductive method to data analysis.

Using interviews or any method that collects contextual or sentiment data, the researcher categorizes the information into smaller subsets, and later links it to higher order concepts or themes.

The grounded theory approach is made up of the following three coding procedures: open, axial and selective (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

1. Open coding is the process of pinpointing and then categorizing the smallest unit of information found in open text comments. Open codes can form hierarchies of concepts that can eventually be rationalized or combined to the most coherent categories.

2. Axial coding takes the open codes a step further by identifying the like-kind relationships between other open codes, and then creates a higher order category.
3. Selective coding identifies an emergent construct or existing theory that best describes the phenomena under study, fitting the axial codes under one broad umbrella.

Grounded theory is a significant method of research as it provides prescriptive guidelines for conducting qualitative analysis. It provides iterative strategies to integrate the data capture and analysis process, and it provides a legitimate approach to empirical research. Many researchers have confidently and successfully applied grounded theory across many different disciplines. As a complement to the A/R problem-solving cycle, grounded theory was used to empirically categorize the experiences of the participants of this study. The rigor and robust nature of analyzing the data facilitated the emerging constructs and theories born from the practical A/R experience.

3.6 Data Collection & Source

The source of the data for this research comes from the actual setting and context for the APA BRG. This setting, which includes the leadership team of the BRG, internal stakeholders (the sales organization of the company and senior leaders), and the external stakeholders (potential customers), provided the context in which the A/R could be performed. Throughout the process I captured notes, leveraged program artifacts, conducted stakeholder interviews, and recorded moments through the life cycle to reflect on the experiences throughout the research. As a formal practice, I employed the use of both semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

3.6.1 Semi- structured interviews

At different points throughout the A/R life cycle, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with the team members, internal business partners, and external stakeholders, to capture how the process is working, and the experience gained. The creation and use of an interview guide was employed to ensure a repeatable process across stakeholder participants. The interview

insights were used during the grounded theory analysis to identify emerging themes, constructs, and existing theories that can explain the phenomenon under study (See appendix I)

3.6.2 Unstructured interviews

In situations which are more natural and informal, unstructured interviews took place with both internal and external stakeholders, with the intent to provide a conversational experience. The free-flowing experience lends itself to the rich dialog that ensues from the engaging conversation. Questions focused on the attitudes, feelings, and beliefs experienced by the participants. The insights were consolidated and used to adjust the intervention (s) deployed throughout the study.

3.6.3 Quantitative methods

For the quasi-experimental design portion of the study, two years of sales information from two market units were collected after the A/R life cycle of this research. The market unit sales information—which includes volume, revenue, and gross profit—was collected for a large ATO. Data was captured at both the individual customer outlet and at the ATO level. The unit of analysis is measured and analyzed at the trade organization level. This market unit had signed on to a formal customer marketing agreement (CMA) with the MNC. This relationship was driven by the efforts of the APA BRG. The activities and work which led to the signing of the CMA is considered the APA BRG intervention. This allows for the appropriate generalization of performance results between the ATO's market units, and within the individual market units. A statistical analysis containing a historical view of KPIs both before and after the BRG intervention(s), were captured to illustrate organizational performance improvement.

To fulfill the quasi-experimental design, a control group was identified in a separate market unit. The control group population contained members of the ATO field chapter located in that respective market unit. The control market received no influence or representation by the BRG (the independent variable). The control group helped to illustrate the performance lift a BRG can have on influencing organizational performance, contributing to MNC business goals. (See appendix II). The statistical test used with this dataset included a Levene's test and a paired t-test. A Levene's test (Levene, 1960) is used

to assess variance homogeneity between two different samples, a precondition to run a parametric test such as the paired t-test. If the significance from this test has a p-value less than 0.05, then variances are significantly different and parametric tests cannot be used. A parametric test assumes a normal distribution of values within the dataset and uses the mean to measure central tendency. Paired t-test is a parametric test used to determine a significant difference between the means on a paired observation (Rietveld and van Hout, 2015). This comparison can be done on the same sample, at two different points in time, to demonstrate a before and after effect.

CHAPTER 4: ACTION RESEARCH LIFE CYCLE

4.1 The Company and Context

In 2000, this MNC had experienced a class action lawsuit for discrimination. The lawsuit was eventually settled, and as a next step the MNC had a renewed focus on D&I. The MNC strives to create an inclusive work environment free of discrimination and harassment with respect to race, gender, color, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity and/or expression, or veteran status.

The MNC believes that a sense of community enhances its ability to recruit, develop, advance, and retain diverse and representative talent. The MNC recognized that the creation of Employee Forums (EFs) would be instrumental in helping develop that sense of community. Therefore, the MNC supported the formation and operation of EFs, defined here as groups of associates with common interests or backgrounds who wish to contribute to each other's professional development, foster a sense of community, and enhance their individual and collective abilities.

In total the following seven EFs were formed: African American, Asian Pacific American (APA), Women's Network, Hispanic, Military Veterans, LGBTQA, & Administrative Professionals. The APA was originally created to contribute to the MNC's commitment to promote diversity in the workplace and community. It was set up to provide opportunities to cultivate the member base through people development, peer education, knowledge sharing, and community engagement.

Initially created as a social network, APA began hosting cultural awareness events, which aligned with national holidays. Events such as Lunar New Year and May Asian Heritage Month became staple events in which APA members would plan and coordinate activities that showcased Asian heritage. In addition to the cultural awareness events sponsored in the workplace, the APA focused on career

development, and providing a platform where members could enhance their leadership skills in the workplace.

Over the years, the APA developed a reputation of being a strong corporate citizen. Through partnerships with local Asian-based non-profits, the APA demonstrated how to give back to the community, and at the same time build brand recognition in the community they represent.

In 2007, the APA began to illustrate objectives aligned with business goals in the annual business plan. These goals were recycled for the next several years. Unfortunately, these business-oriented goals outlined were never really operationalized or accounted for throughout the cycle year. The APA continued to focus on networking, cultural awareness building, and community outreach. In 2010, the APA began to use marketing data to shape the story for the ensuing business opportunity which led to specialized marketing campaigns for the end consumer.

The MNC is a large marketing and manufacturing firm, specializing in one of the most popular consumer brands in the world. A significant part of their business model is the franchising system. Through a license agreement, the MNC allows sales, production, and distribution rights to franchisees world-wide. In 2011, the MNC had purchased its largest North American franchise partner. This integration brought in a unique focus on diversity and EFs. The sales and distribution franchisee drives speed and execution in the marketplace, with an operational focus to deliver against sales and customer service measures. The franchisee established BRGs with the hope and intent to leverage diversity as a business enabler. Post integration, the parent MNC took on the BRG nomenclature as the 'concept' of a BRG was gaining traction in the D&I community, and in theory it made business sense to align diversity groups with actual business objectives.

4.2 Participants & Action Research Process

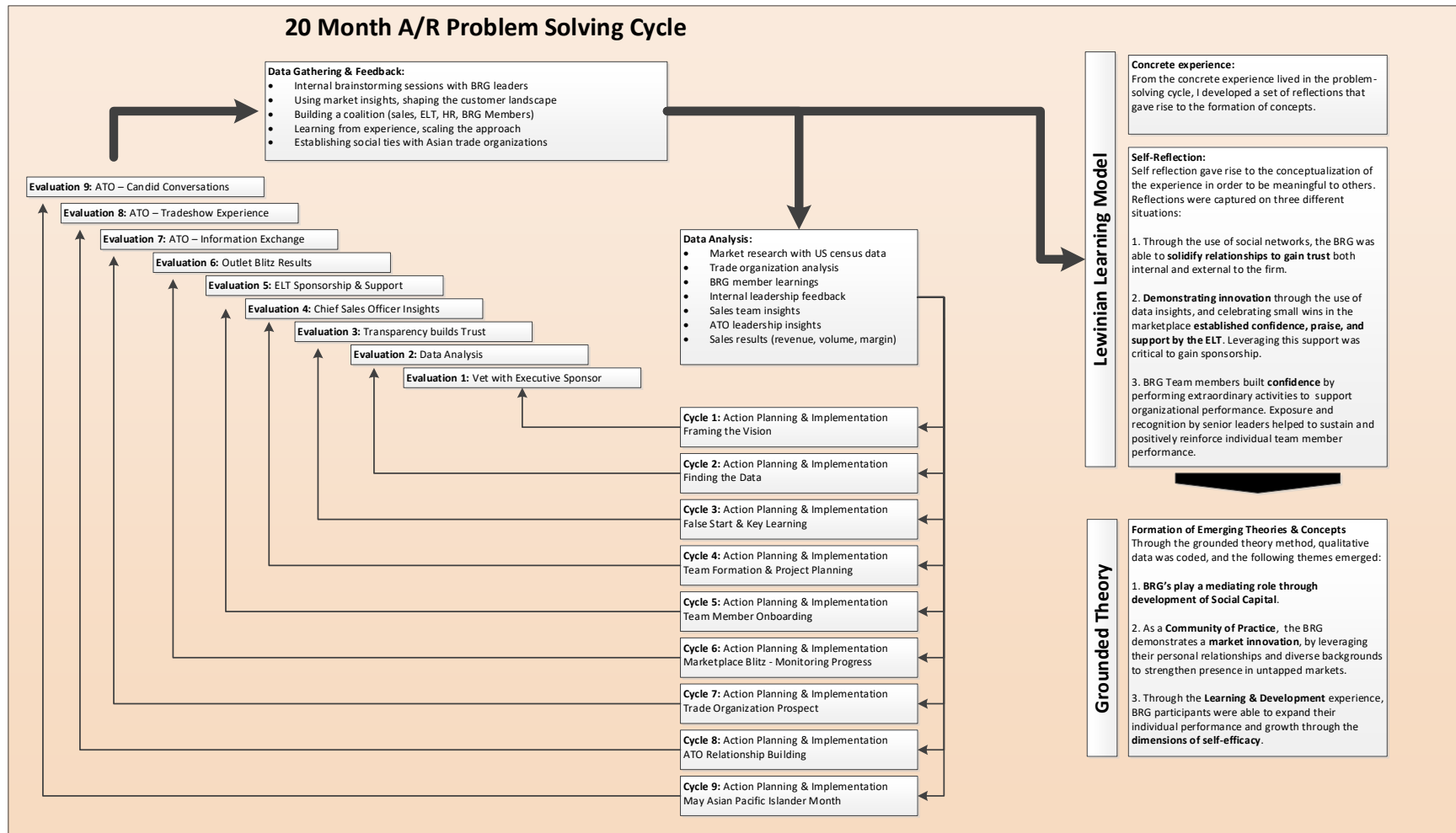
As the chair of the APA BRG, I presided over all activities performed by the BRG (see figure 2). There were multiple committees responsible for leading activities which promoted goodwill in the community, and professional development for BRG team members (see Appendix III).

Figure 2: BRG Governance Structure



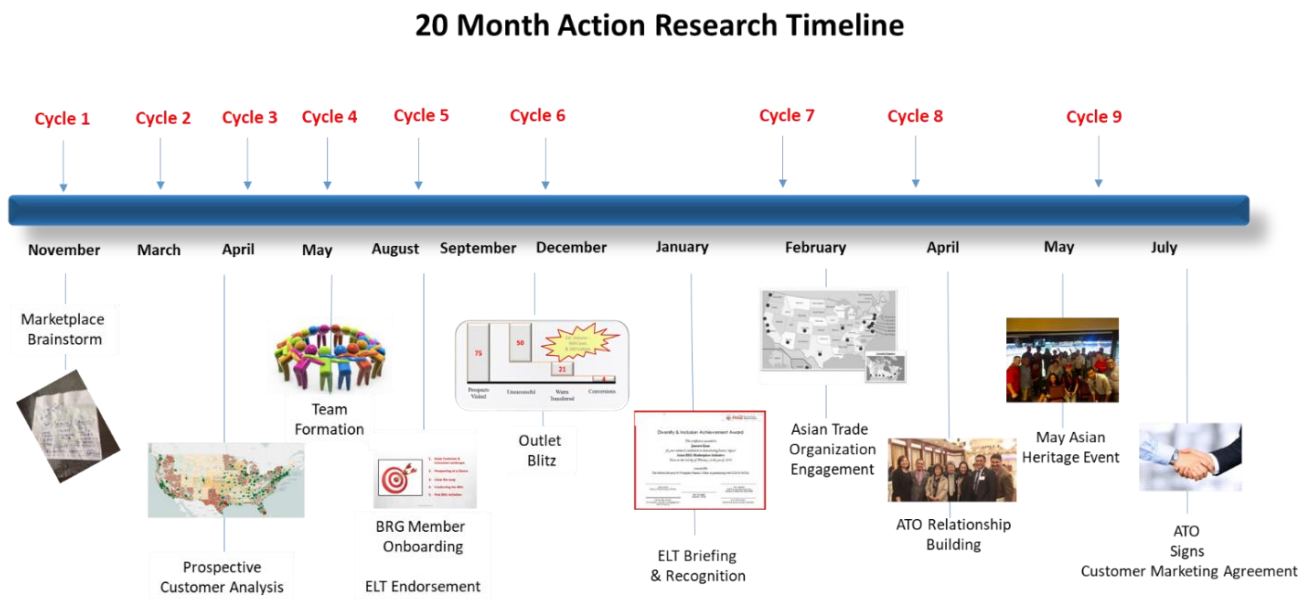
The focus of this A/R study is a byproduct of a strategic initiative focused on marketplace growth. Therefore, I acted as the catalyst driving change within the business (Coughlan and Coughlan, 2002). As a basis for this research, I used Lorenzo’s problem-solving cycle. There were nine cycles that spanned a 20-month period (see figure 3). During the A/R cycles, constant learning and reflection points helped to solidify concrete experiences (Lorenzo, 2010). These experiences helped shape the questions used in semi-structured interviews. The insights gained from those interviews were subsequently used in the grounded theory analysis. This study captured insights and reflection points from fourteen participants. The participants include members of the BRG, executive leaders, sales and marketing leaders, and external partners in the community, who would become direct customers. Each participant signed a formal consent to take part in this research (See appendix 4). For confidentiality purposes, pseudonyms were used for each participant throughout the process.

Figure 3: 20 Month A/R Problem-Solving Cycle – adapted from Lorenzo, 2010



Before, during, and after the A/R cycles (see figure 4), participant feedback was captured through formal and informal meetings, emails, semi-structured interviews, voice-recorded interviews, and videos. Participant consent and approval were formally collected before the capture of their feedback. These reflection points are included as quotations in formal callout boxes, throughout different points in this section, and in the results and discussion section of this research. The following table includes the background of each participant.

Figure 4: A/R Timeline



4.3 Action Research Participants

Table 1: Action Research Participants

Action Research Participants				
#	Name (Pseudonym)	Participant Background	Relationship with BRG	Motivation To Participate/Partner with The BRG
1	Jill	25-year employee Inside Sales Participated in the BRG when it first was created in early 2000's.	Chair – Strategic Initiatives	The BRG was no longer a “a special interest or cultural thing, but we could provide our backgrounds and specialties to the company to really make a difference in the business.”

Action Research Participants				
#	Name (Pseudonym)	Participant Background	Relationship with BRG	Motivation To Participate/Partner with The BRG
2	Yolanda	5-year employee Finance/Audit	Co-Chair – Professional Development	“I was new to company, and I had time. And that is how I joined. Afterwards, being able to see the different values, and connect with other similar people, it was awesome to build that connection and network.”
3	Dhiren	2-year employee Budget and Planning	VP – ABRG	“It was good to see a diverse group that I can connect with better, and I wanted to get mentorship and coaching, and also get connected to my culture.”
4	Sarah	3-year employee Knowledge & Insights	Member	“I was an active participant, being a person of Asian descent, I wanted to get involved in any events.”
5	Sanjeev	4-year employee Operations & Distribution	Co- Chair – Professional Development	I had a really good experience participating in an Asian Employee Network with a similar organization. When I joined this company’s BRG, I saw as a good opportunity, as I thought the work, we do is something similar to what I previously experienced.”
6	Carol	4-year employee Finance Leadership Program	Chair	“When I joined the BRG I joined as a member and participated in different events. I found out that I had a lot in common with many members and many other cultures. And it was fun to be able to do this, and something beyond, from a self-identity perspective.”
7	Cheryl	2-year employee Communications Leader	Member	“I joined the BRG for networking purposes. Given that many members share the same background, it gave me an immediate connection.”
8	Amber	8-year employee	Internal Partner MNC Executive – HR	“The purpose of the BRGs is to provide forums for employee led groups to really drive diversity & inclusion initiatives, for each of the respective populations, the groups represented.”

Action Research Participants

#	Name (Pseudonym)	Participant Background	Relationship with BRG	Motivation To Participate/Partner with The BRG
9	Ron	18-year employee	Internal Partner MNC Executive – Sponsor	“At the company I felt there was a robust community for BRGs, even before I got involved. And I think a lot of that early development in BRGs was the need to change the culture, based on our lawsuit in 2001. To me, I looked at it to provide support and to be a vehicle to facilitate engagement more thoughtfully into the organization, and then leverage the diversity strategies that the company was trying to implement.”
10	Clint	30-year employee	Internal Partner MNC Executive	“I saw partnering with the BRG as an opportunity for employee development, as well as a business opportunity.” “The thing that sold me was the willingness and excitement of the BRGs to expand to play a more meaningful role in drawing our business.”
11	Bill	12-year employee	Internal Partner Sales Leader – Southeast Region	Developing new business through diverse networks was a great opportunity for sales to partner with the BRG.
12	Sam	8-year employee	Internal Partner Sales Manager – Southeast Region	Working in the field, I was not aware of the BRG until my General Manager asked me to look into the ATO group, and how they were trying to get a bigger footprint within our MNC system. That’s why when we came to HQ for the May Asian Heritage event, I met you for the first time, and that’s when we began to build our relationship.
13	Charles	Potential Customer – ATO	External Partner Customer and Community Partner President ATO – Southeast chapter	When we met you at the International Tradeshow, you invited us, and we learned out more about the relationship with the company. You provided me with a lot of opportunities to meet with you. And then I met with the

Action Research Participants				
#	Name (Pseudonym)	Participant Background	Relationship with BRG	Motivation To Participate/Partner with The BRG
				Key Account Manager, and he helped me a little more. We went together to MNC HQ, and we continued to build our relationship. And he helped establish the relationship with our field chapter.
14	Jack	Potential Customer – ATO	External Partner Customer and Community Partner VP – ATO Mid-Atlantic chapter	During our 2016 annual banquet, we learned about the BRG, and we thought about going to the MNC HQ, to rekindle the relationship as an organization.

4.4 Context Setting

In the fall of 2014, the APA BRG began drafting the business plan for the upcoming year. As in years past the focus had been on satisfying the following three pillars:

1. The community: actively participate in community outreach events which demonstrate the BRGs commitment to giving back.
2. The workplace: the workplace has two missions. One is to establish an engagement strategy to educate the BRG member base and the broader MNC community on different ethnicities and cultures. The second is for professional development of the BRG officers and general members. Building and/or leveraging leadership training, coaching, or executive presentations on career development, were the focus for the development.
3. The marketplace: building a bridge between the MNC and the Asian American market to ultimately demonstrate business impact.

The first two pillars had been the bread and butter of the BRG. For the community, partnering with nonprofit organizations, providing community service hours, and participating in fundraisers were commonplace. A significant part of the BRG leadership team and the member base were interested in

the traditional virtues of being part of a BRG, building networks both inside and outside of the MNC. In addition, workplace activities in the form of cultural awareness celebrations (e.g., Lunar New Year, May Asian Heritage Month, Diwali, etc.) and leadership workshops are common practice as these events had been very successful and the process repeatable. Marketplace impact had been identified as an imperative, yet no substantive efforts had been put behind this goal. The BRG leadership team and the Global D&I organization realized the importance behind winning in the marketplace, yet there had been a lack of insights or plans on how to take action to drive business impact.

During the fall of 2014 I had attended a college football game at my alma mater. While there, I discovered an opportunity for how the BRG could make an impact to the business. The game had a sellout crowd and therefore on-campus parking was difficult. Seeing this as an opportunity, a local hotel owner charged twenty dollars for parking spots on his premise. After parking in the hotel parking lot across the street from the stadium, I returned after the game and began a conversation with the hotel owner. The hotel owner and I were of the same nationality, and he happened to be from the same city in India as my wife. As we got to know each other and share common experiences, I noticed a competitor's product being sold at his hotel. At that point I shared with him who I work for and described what the APA BRG is, and how it adds value back to Asian American professionals. I asked him if he would like to learn more about how my company could help add value to his business. He obliged, and the next day I reached out to the local sales leadership, to share with them this warm lead. Within a week, a sales representative was onsite, making their first visit. The idea of getting to know someone and starting off on common ground was not that novel, yet it proved to be effective. Topics such as sales, pricing, or products were never part of the discussion. Rather insights around culture, heritage, and a common set of circumstances were what led to a relationship based on similar experiences and trust (Putnam, 1993). I could see there was a promising opportunity, but I quickly realized the challenge in pinpointing Asian business owners and where they are located. Attempting to go door-to-door to

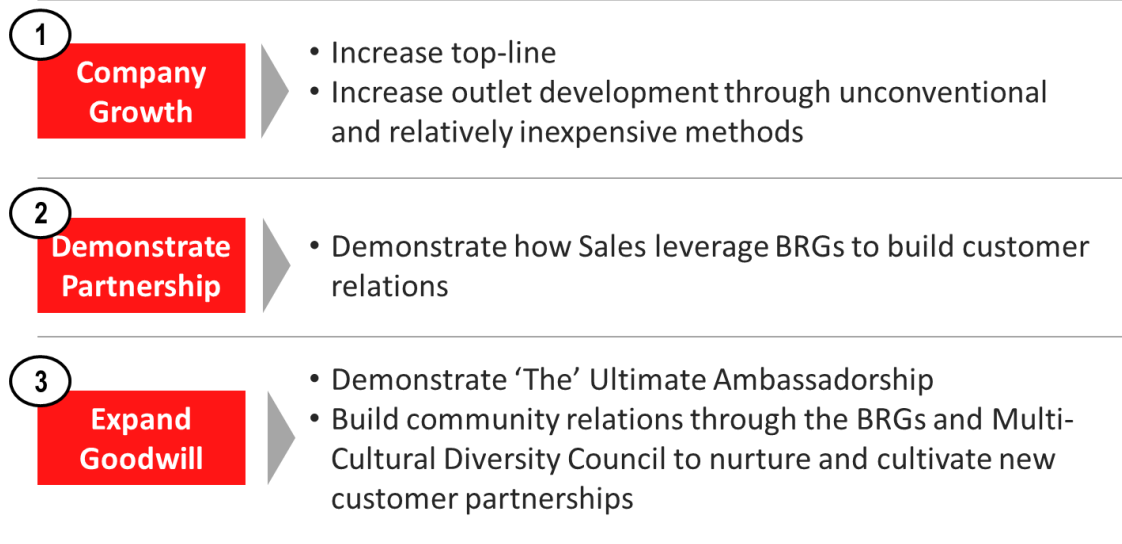
business outlets would be both random and futile, as the likelihood of walking into an Asian owned establishment would be low.

4.5 Cycle One: Action Planning & Implementation: Framing the Vision

After experiencing this interaction, I began to work with a subset of the BRG leadership team to build out a high-level marketplace vision (see figure 5). As a team we brainstormed possibilities to support business growth in the multicultural marketplace. The question posed was how the APA BRG could help the top-line growth of the MNC. The APA BRG engagement with Asian business owners (customers) was an untapped opportunity that could lead to the increase of outlets serviced by the MNC. The vision became quite simple – live up to the namesake and become a true business resource. Dhiren, the BRGs co-vice president, reflected on the experience, and the business planning for the upcoming year.

“During the post Diwali party, we talked about how we can build the business into the BRG. The group was excited in the potential to bring the business into the BRG. There was so much positive energy, it made it instrumental in building the case not only in the BRG, but to the broader MNC, to drive something unique and drive the experiment.” – Dhiren, BRG Leader

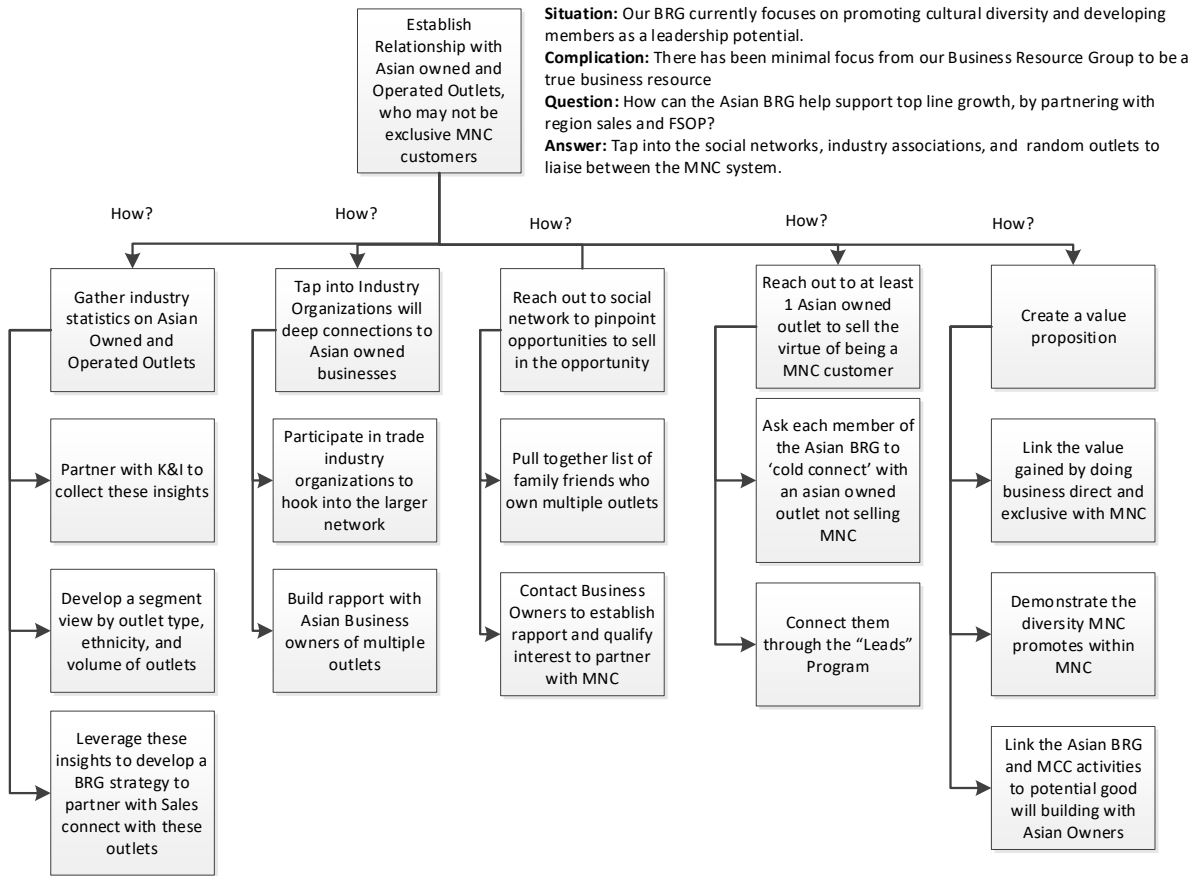
Figure 5: High Level Marketplace Vision



In January 2015, my two BRG co-vice presidents and I held a brainstorming session to iron out an initial plan. Using the Mintos pyramid principle (Minto, 1996) of structured problem-solving, the team developed a decision tree which outlined the situation, the complication, the question, and the answer(s) to address the opportunity (see figure 6). Through this method the team created an initial plan (see figure 7) to gather statistics on the Asian American customer market and identify ways to tap into social networks to pinpoint potential customers.

“When we created a business case, it was clearly identified as a white space exercise. This was something to the best of our knowledge, the MNC was not exploring, and there was no line of sight of how to gain value or go after these types of outlets.” – Dhiren, BRG Leader

Figure 6: Leveraging BRG as A Business Resource Framework



4.6 Cycle One: Evaluation—Vet with Executive Sponsor

Shortly after our brainstorming session, I scheduled a meeting with our BRG Executive Sponsor, Ron, who also happened to be part of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) of the MNC. During the review, Ron was optimistic with the plan. During our conversation he pointed out there should be a distinction between “selling” to customers vs. how the BRG can “assist” the business in developing relationships. He also pointed out the MNC may already have a multicultural initiative underway, and not to assume the Asian American business owners is an untapped market. Ron committed to connecting the BRG with the Chief Sales Officer in North America, to pitch the idea and the approach once the plan was refined.

“What I was excited about, and it was reflected in the charter that was put together for the APA BRG, was there was a more discreet tie to the business objectives of the organization, with a very clear line of sight of how to support the BRGs, but also how to support the organization through the BRGs, by connecting with the external community that happens to be of the same ilk, and that was unique, I had never seen that before and I thought this was aspirational, but I also thought it was needed, and that it would be uniquely supported, because it was tied to the business.” – Ron; Executive Leader & BRG

Executive Sponsor

While the conceptual process outlined “identify potential customers,” the expectation was to leverage the MNC’s third party knowledge and insights provider, Nielsen. Nielsen is the world’s largest aggregator of consumer data. As a strategic partner, they provide the MNC with shopper insights which feed into the MNC’s marketing and commercialization process. However, while robust and thorough, the data captured did not provide insight into the ethnicity or nationality of the MNC customers.

Figure 7: Business Case

Asian BRG Business Alignment – Business Case

Background

The purpose of The MNC's Business Resource Groups (BRG) is to "provide our associates in the United States with opportunities to connect with colleagues who share similar interests and backgrounds."

The purpose of the Asian BRG is to promote diversity as a business and provide opportunities for Asian American business insights that assist MNC in better connecting with key customer and consumer groups, people development, peer education, knowledge sharing and community engagement.

Opportunity

While there is significant focus on promoting cultural diversity and providing professional development to Asian BRG members, there is an opportunity to strengthen our focus on being a true business resource. BRG engagement with Asian customers to develop business relations is an untapped opportunity to increase outlet growth.

How can the Asian BRG help support MNC's top line growth?

By tapping into our social networks, industry trade organizations, and individual Asian owned outlets, the BRG can liaise between the MNC's system and potential new customers to strengthen our customer base.

How Do We Make this a Reality?

- Gather industry statistics on Asian-owned & operated outlets
- Create a value proposition based on trust and anchored to culture specific values
- Tap into Industry Trade Organizations with deep connections to Asian-owned businesses
- Partner with Sales and the LEADS program to leverage the internal sales process

Potential Benefit for MNC

- Increase top-line growth
- Increase outlet development through unconventional and relatively inexpensive methods
- Demonstrate how Sales leverage BRGs to build customer relations
- Build community relations through the BRGs, Multi-Cultural Diversity Council, and PAC to nurture and cultivate new customer partnerships

4.7 Cycle One: Data Gathering & Feedback

At this point I took a moment to reflect on the outlined approach and the initial assumptions about the resources the MNC has invested to focus on the Asian American customer market. This initial assumption could prove to be detrimental to the marketplace vision of the BRG. If the BRG presented to senior leaders the proposition that Asian owned business owners were an "untapped market," it could be misunderstood as a misinformed assessment and potentially reflect poorly on the sales organization. It would also make the BRG look as if they did not do their homework on the MNC's capabilities and priorities in the multicultural market. Heeding the advice of our executive sponsor was extremely beneficial as it allowed the team to regroup and re-assess the current state marketing efforts. Fortunately, one of the APA BRG leadership team committee members was a leader in multicultural marketing and could help validate the MNC's efforts underway. The BRG leadership had discovered there was a process for capturing knowledge and insights on the end consumer (the people who buy

product from our customers). Sales and marketing campaigns had been established to concentrate on select multicultural groups, particularly African American (AA) and Latino Americans. The campaigns were focused on advertising in select markets, particularly anchored to popular brands purchased in those respective markets. However, there was no specific focus on multicultural customers, and in particular, Asian business owners. Sarah, a BRG member, had been working for the MNC for three years. Her specialty was knowledge and insights. She had researched the multicultural marketing efforts underway to understand if the Asian customer base was an area of focus.

“Multicultural business in general for the company, there was a focus, but not a lot of focus. In our normal business routines in our marketing space there was work going on, but it was heavily focused on the Hispanic and AA space, and that’s where primarily most of the budget was going.” – Sarah; BRG

Member & Knowledge & Insights Leader

This validation point allowed the BRG to continue forward with our proposition and marketplace analysis, as the sales or marketing functions were not focused on the Asian market segment. As an organization, the long-standing customer relationships were with large stores, which included super centers, grocery outlets, and specialty retailers. Other channels included food service operations, which contained large restaurants and fast-food chains. The market center was heavily concentrated with competition, which required significant economic and human capital investment to ensure a strong market share. Given this business environment, there wasn’t a clear line of sight or incentive for the MNC to focus resources in emerging customer categories or peripheral markets.

“When we showcased the opportunity and when we looked at the incremental value, leaders were surprised, because this was done by a BRG, a process that is generally performed by a Business Unit (BU) team. This generated and built goodwill between the BRG and the sales and marketing team.” –

Dhiren; BRG Leader

4.8 Cycle Two: Action Planning & Implementation: Finding the Data

By tapping internal networks of employees, the BRG learned about a technology used to identify prospective customers. The proprietary tool is called “Outlet Galaxy.” This tool contains data about prospective customers who currently do not purchase product direct from the MNC. It also contains insights on potential customers who sell our product but purchase it from an indirect source. An indirect source may be a full line operator (FLO) or a big-box retailer (e.g., Wal-Mart or Costco). An FLO is a third-party logistics provider, who distributes products on behalf of the MNC. Ironically, during a flight on business travel, I serendipitously ran into the product owner of Outlet Galaxy. Jill had been an employee with the MNC for over 25 years. She was responsible for training and coaching account managers on how to ‘collaborate for value’ (the MNC’s proprietary method for selling to customers), and how to use Outlet Galaxy to “call on” customers (an industry term that means to visit a new or existing customer). I scheduled some time with Jill to learn more about the tool and its capabilities. Outlet Galaxy contained over 6.8 million customers across the US market. The customer data includes insights from the US Census Bureau. This information is shared with the local sales team across the organization. The data is used as ‘leads,’ or prospective customers the sales team could call on. When a ‘lead’ is converted to become a customer, the salesperson updates the database to reflect this change, thus taking the ‘prospective’ customer off the list. Within Outlet Galaxy, each customer is considered a ‘record.’ Each record can contain up to 144 fields, or customer attributes. These attributes are important as it provides insights into the type of customer they are, the channel and business segment they are in, their location and contact information, the annual revenues and growth potential, as well as the ethnic background of the business owner. The ethnicity attribute was a significant factor that contributes to the APA BRGs goal to make an impact in the marketplace. This information was the missing link that could be used to connect the dots between prospective customers, owner ethnicity, location, business segmentation, and

sales channel. A sales channel can be defined as the type of outlet that sells products (e.g., grocery, convenience, gas stations, liquor stores, etc.)

“Outlet Galaxy was the repository that allowed us to build our business case. It had business intelligence that could tell us consensus data, which helped us identify where the business owners were located. It also gave us input and feedback on where we can identify and locate Asian business owners, that we could partner in with the sales business.” – Jill; BRG Leader

4.9 Cycle Two: Evaluation—Data Analysis

Team members within the BRG volunteered to analyze the data to understand the Asian owner-customer landscape. The dataset was filtered, with the final count of 700,000 prospective Asian-owned businesses across the US. Further data analysis revealed the business segment, channel, sub-trade group (e.g., carryout, convenience stores, hotels, etc.), location, preferred language, and sales volume. This information became the proverbial smoking gun, as it was the missing link that provided a fact-based view of the market opportunity, and the approach that could be used to call on the customers. To further illustrate, Dhiren (Co-VP of APA BRG) visualized the potential Asian customer concentration using a heat map of the US market (see figure 8). In addition to the heat map, the BRG team members created a robust pivot tool which allowed for drill-down capabilities into the ethnicity, sales channel, sub-trade group, and location. This allowed the BRG to pinpoint customers based on ethnicity, and to later ‘assign’ potential customers to BRG members of the same ethnic background. Sarah, a BRG team member who worked in knowledge and insights (K&I) brought a specialized skill to the team. Her ability to analyze data and create a logical and detailed view of the customers, helped to establish an ‘Asian Customer Prospect’ database, with custom filters.

“I brought the lens of data from my job. Taking a data dump (millions) and making it usable and actionable. I took help from team members, slicing and dicing, and putting into a useful format. And making it a productive session to run with. It was a bit of a heavy lift, but a gratifying one.” – Sarah;

BRG Member (K&I)

4.9.1 Coalition building

The APA BRG had four regional chapters in both the US and Canada. To expand the footprint of the marketplace focus, I socialized the approach and the opportunity with the field chapter presidents. Walking through the methodology along with the opportunity to leverage data from Outlet Galaxy generated initial excitement to align on this initiative. The initial reaction was positive, as the BRG chapter leaders saw this as an opportunity to grow the business in unconventional ways.

“Learning how can we synergize between other BU’s, such as Canada, to leverage target sales materials to reach out to our Asian customer market base was a big opportunity.” – Jill - BRG Chair – Strategic

Initiatives

4.10 Cycle Two: Data Gathering & Feedback

After capturing this unique, fact-based view of the potential customer landscape, this shed light on the ‘size of the prize.’ This provided intelligence that could help our BRG tell a story of what the opportunity is and what potential success could look like. Using the data driven insights, we updated our business plan to include these details, as it would become a significant factor to influence advocacy and a path forward for the BRG.

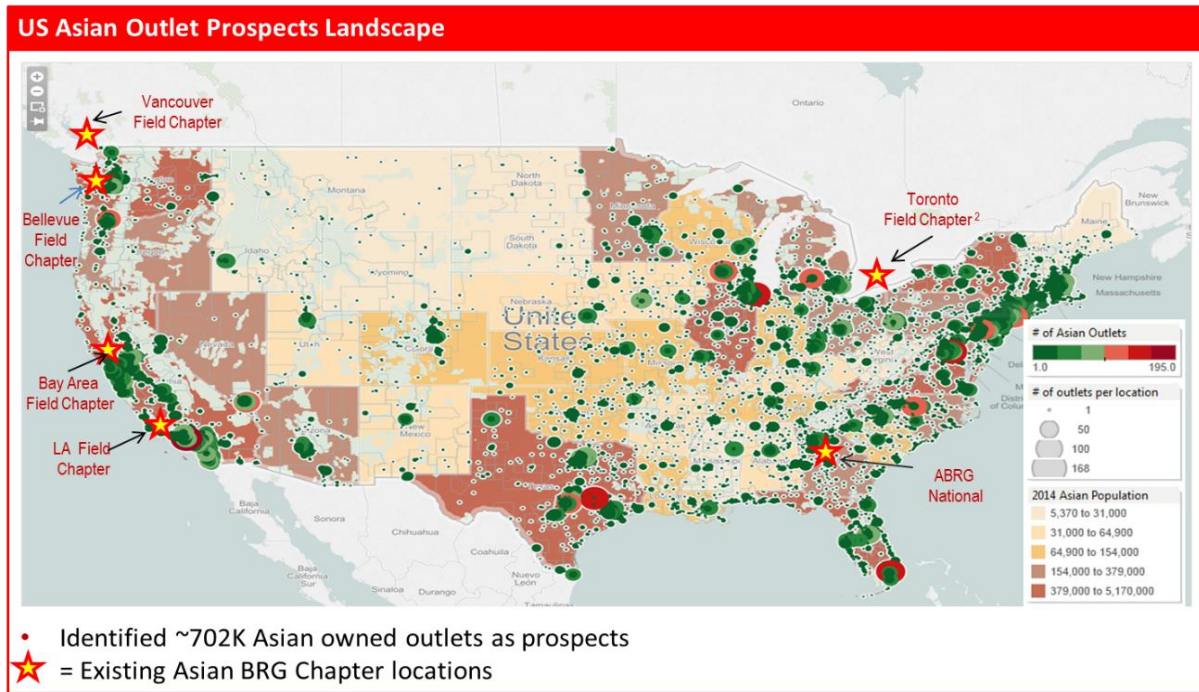
“The capability and tools helped us not only to look at the millions of rows of data, but we were able to visualize in a concise manner. By this I mean we could look at the zip code, we could look at the US map, understand the location, the maximum concentration of the location, we pinpointed the larger chains of business. We didn’t build a case out of a vacuum. We used a data driven decision not only on the opportunity, but how to focus and where to prioritize. It gave a true view of what the landscape looked like.” -**Dhiren; BRG Leader**

The initial results from the analysis were telling. It gave the senior leadership confidence that the BRG was on to something. And there was a tangible business outcome that could be actively pursued.

“What you did was unique, no other BRGs was that cogent, planful, and thoughtful, about linking the community-based opportunity with the objective of the BRG, and I think the leaders came running. That’s why you had not only the Presidents,’ but you also had the business leaders who had a vested stake in the outcome you were trying to do because you led with data.” – **Ron; MNC Executive & BRG**

Executive Sponsor

Figure 8: Asian Prospective Customer Landscape



4.11 Cycle Three: Action Planning & Implementation—False Start & Key Learning

Social ties (Granovetter, 1973) were originally identified as a vehicle to help identify potential customers. Through my internal contacts I identified a family friend who happened to make a successful living owning, operating, and managing property in the lodging industry. With over one hundred franchise hotels that spanned the most recognized brands in the industry, he managed over three billion US dollars in real estate capital, which was under a real estate investment trust (REIT). Most of his hotels were not on the ‘brand standard’ with the franchisors. Franchisors such as Marriott have CMAs that span across the brand of hotels regardless of MNC ownership or franchise ownership. However, under the umbrella of a large brand such as Marriott, there may be some sub-brands, such as Courtyard by Marriott or Fairfield Inn, which may not require the franchisee to sell any brand of product, because they are not covered under the ‘Brand Standard’ contract. This family friend had several hotels that could become potential customers, receiving product through the MNC’s Direct Store Distribution model. I scheduled a face-to-face meeting with him, at his office in Pennsylvania. During the meeting I

focused on getting to know the REIT owner's history and successful career journey. At the end of the meeting, I invited the REIT owner to be a panelist and to present at the annual May Asian Heritage Month event at the MNC corporate headquarters. The intent was to honor him by having him present his personal story to the employees and leaders of the MNC, as well as meet with senior leaders to discuss the potential opportunity to become a direct customer (see Figure 9). The opportunity to bring him to the MNC headquarters was socialized with key sponsors of the APA BRG. There was a significant level of excitement, and considerable planning outlined to cultivate the relationship. The REIT owner had initially committed to attending the event, but several weeks later, had backed out of his commitment. The opportunity unfortunately never came to fruition.

From Humble Beginnings to a \$3 Billion Behemoth – An Asian Entrepreneur’s Story of Perseverance and Growth

Mr. Raj Kapoor – Chairman and Co-Founder: Kapoor Hospitality Trust

Over the years, Entrepreneurship and innovation has been a key focus for our company. From growing brand standards to crossing into adjacent categories, the spirit of growth and category development is paramount to business success.

As Chairman of Kapoor Hospitality Trust, Mr. Raj Kapoor shares a very similar growth story. As a 1st generation Indian immigrant, Mr. Kapoor started his career as a chemical engineer. But he knew there was more to life than working as an engineer for the state of Pennsylvania. Mr. Kapoor devised a unique strategy to enter the hotel lodging industry. In 1984 he started with one motel in Harrisburg, PA. Since then he has owned over 100 hotels and crossed into adjacent markets such as general construction and procurement, and assisted living. With over \$3

Billion in managed capital, his company has been part of the NYSE since 2008.

In addition to his professional achievements, Mr. Kapoor has been actively engaged in philanthropy. In 2010 the United Way awarded Mr. Kapoor and his wife Lana, with the prestigious Tocqueville Award for their outstanding humanitarian efforts both locally and globally.

Come join the Asian Business Resource Group (BRG) as we host a facilitated discussion with Mr. Raj Kapoor. We will learn more about his compelling story, from his humble beginnings, to the approach he took to navigate growth, and the various civic outreach he and his wife are involved in, both in the US and in India.

4.12 Cycle Three: Evaluation—Transparency Builds Trust

After reflecting on my approach in socializing with the REIT owner, two failure points were identified. One was establishing trust from the beginning. Open and upfront transparency was missing from the dialog (Naphiet & Ghosal, 1998). I had not once asked the REIT owner if he would be interested in learning more about how the MNC could help him in his business goals. Had the discussion included this relevant point it would have avoided any misunderstanding of false pretenses. Second, I did not offer to cover the travel logistics and accommodations for the REIT owner and his wife, who was his business partner. From a cultural perspective, this was a significant miss. There may have been an inherent expectation to cover the travel and expense costs associated with the trip to the corporate headquarters. Given this was an invitation, extended by a large MNC, the proper courtesy on my part

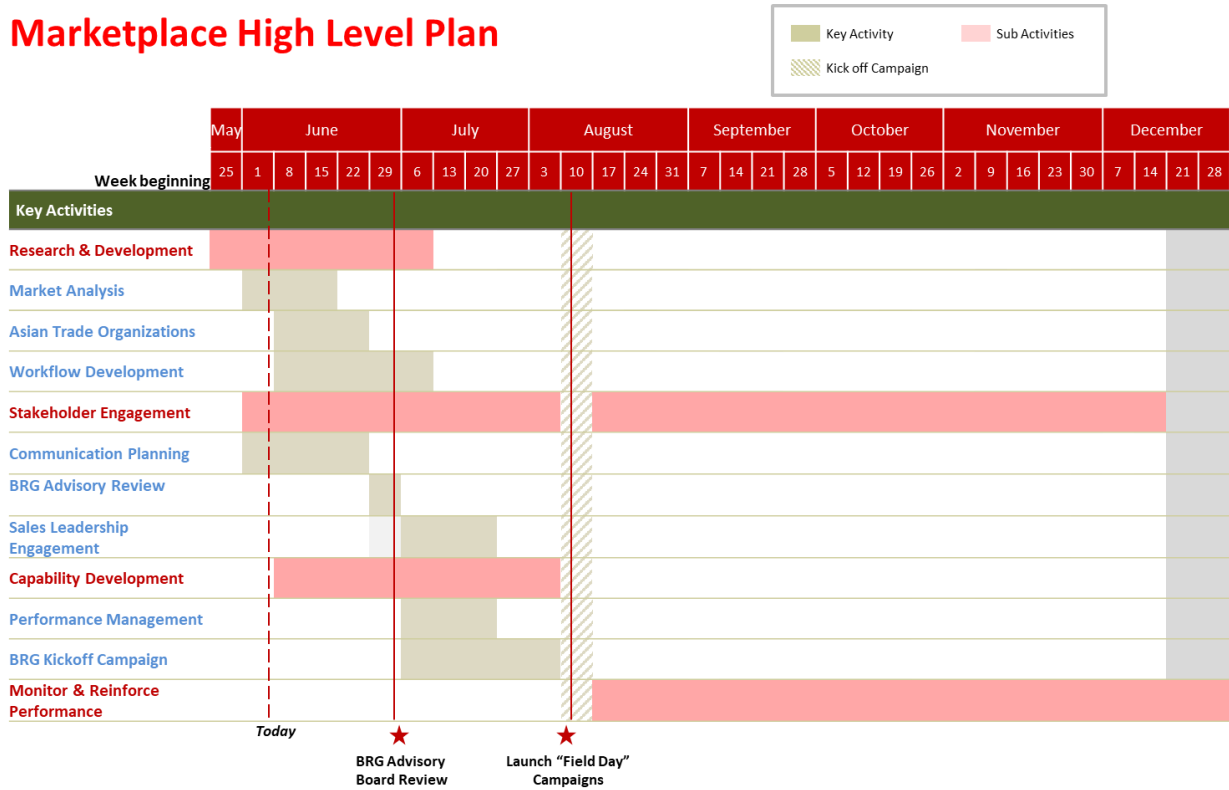
was missing. The opportunity to establish social capital in the form of trust was overlooked, and as a result, the opportunity was lost. Before I had a chance to rectify the situation, unfortunately the REIT owner had committed to another event which would preclude him from participating in ours. This event would have taken place the same week that I aligned the calendars of executive leaders within the MNC to personally meet the REIT owners.

4.13 Cycle Four: Action Planning and Implementation: Team Formation and Project Planning

The Outlet Galaxy tool provided an evidence-based view of the market. After building a solid business case, I began to reach out to the BRG committee leaders at both the national and regional chapters to identify volunteers to be part of the program. A total of sixteen BRG leaders 'raised their hands' to participate. Approximately fifty percent were from regional chapters. This was a positive sign as the prospective customer data was heavily concentrated in their regions, yet the corporate headquarters location of the MNC had a significant customer base as well. To make it a participative process, the BRG leadership team facilitated a kickoff meeting to provide a team orientation, a review of purpose of goals, and most importantly to provide an opportunity for members to choose what they would like to work on. I had outlined four primary work streams: research & development, stakeholder engagement, capability development, and monitoring progress. The goal for each of the team members, once they chose their preferred work stream, was to build out and execute against a marketplace blitz project plan (see figure 10) From June through August, the team established a routine to meet weekly to review milestones, discuss issues, and mitigate any risks. During that period the team brainstormed several activities to enhance the original process previously laid out in January.

Figure 10: Marketplace Project Plan

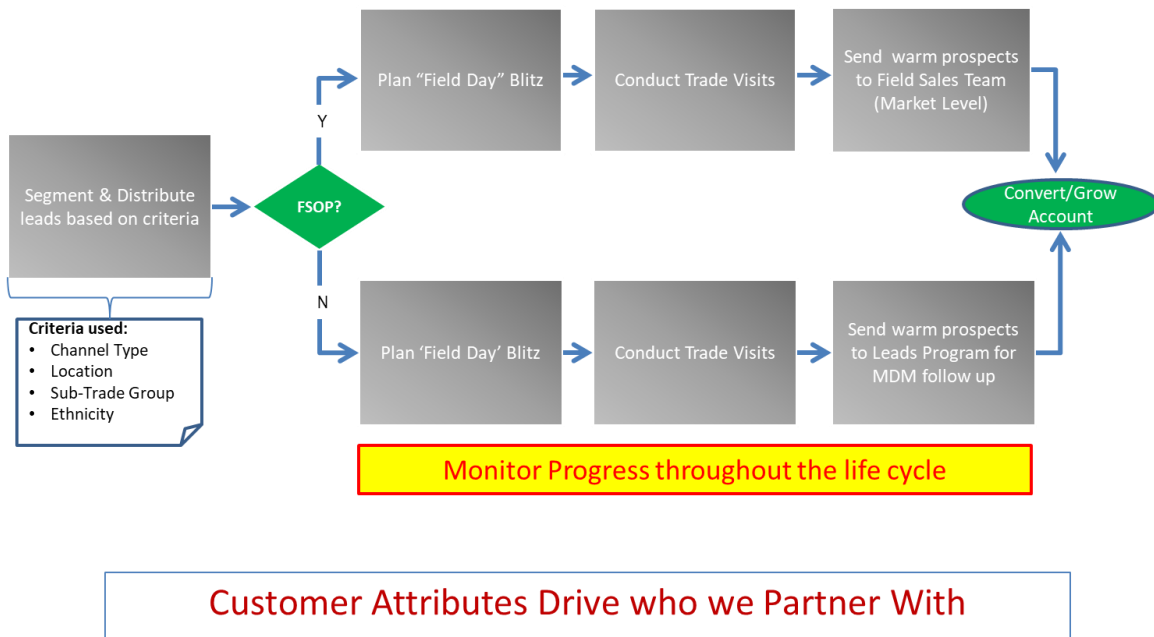
Marketplace High Level Plan



Research and development entailed the following three sub-processes. Market analysis focused on further refining the data set from Outlet Galaxy to be specific and detailed for each of the respective BRG chapters. Trade organizational analysis required research into large organizations whose member base are of Asian descent. This focal point was important as it gave the team an opportunity to work with leaders who had influence within a large member base. Workflow development was the process BRG members would use to build the relationship with prospective Asian customers. Fortunately, three team members worked in the sales function, and could provide real world context of how our BRG team members can partner with the local sales team to call on customers. Detailed processes were created which outlined how leads would be distributed, the steps to take when performing “outlet blitzes,” the formal term used when calling on customers in the trade, how to leverage existing vehicles to transfer leads to the sales team, and the follow up schedule required to maintain a relationship with the prospective customer (see figure 11).

Stakeholder engagement included developing a communications strategy that spanned multiple audiences. The stakeholders included sales leadership, human resources, D&I office, ELT members, our BRG member base, the BRG member’s direct managers, and the broader MNC community. Regular operating routines along with key events were identified to socialize the purpose and goals of the marketplace initiative.

Figure 11: Marketplace Blitz Process Flow



Capability development was an important component to the marketplace initiative, as it provided the necessary knowledge of the sales and customer management life cycle to BRG members who did not work in a sales function. Jill (the owner of Outlet Galaxy) had also maintained a sales curriculum that could be re-purposed for the APA BRG Marketplace Initiative. The BRG team members from sales worked together and provided valuable insights into the existing sales curriculum (see figure 12) and what they believed would be the best information and learning objectives to retain, given the nature of what the BRG members would be doing in the trade.

The challenge the BRG faced was how to add Asian ethnic insights into the training. To address the cultural mores across ethnicity, BRG team members brainstormed different ideas and insights to

include in the training. They documented ethnic customs, sayings, greetings, and traditions. For example, when walking into an Indian owned outlet, putting your hands together as if in a prayer and saying “Namaste Ji” is a sign of honoring the religious aspect of Hinduism and at the same time respecting the owner of the business. The capability development team also analyzed existing training modules which focused on culture awareness in the trade. This information was integrated into a customized sales module to be delivered to BRG members.

Figure 12: Course Objectives

Course Objectives

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Identify the size of the opportunity
- Explain the prospecting process and the tools and resources available for use
- Identify the techniques used to build rapport to increase the likelihood of a successful partnership
- Create an opening statement to establish common ground
- Pinpoint steps to take when carrying out the BRG Outlet Blitz
- Submit ‘warm’ leads through the formal Leads Program



Monitoring progress focused on tracking results once the initiative went live. Turning prospective leads into data points helped to ensure the team could track the progression of the leads throughout the sales life cycle. This data also was used to provide positive reinforcement to recognize the behaviors and the results of the team.

4.13.1 Coalition building—BRG advisory group

After the team had refined the workflow and overall approach, they scheduled a meeting with the Senior Advisory board of the APA BRG. The members of this council included senior leaders across the different BUs, who acted as an advocate and soundboard to the BRG. The team presented the business case along with the data, the approach, the plan, and the timing to begin outlet blitzes. The

feedback was positive and encouraging. However, not every leader was as enthusiastic about the concept.

"I do recall the group felt this was ambitious. But trying to get all the mind space of busy senior leaders, it's not easy. And so, you had two thirds of the group interested, because it's really no risk to them. The fact that you have dedicated cultural leaders that can come up with a vehicle that can link the BRG to their business. The smart ones said, "why wouldn't we want this?" – Ron - MNC Executive & BRG

Executive Sponsor

4.14 Cycle Four: Evaluation—Chief Sales Officer Input

The next step in the process required alignment with the sales organization. The CFO of one of the MNC's business units, and a key APA BRG advocate, brokered a meeting with Dhiren (the co-VP of the BRG), the Chief Sales Officer (CSO) of the MNC's North American business, and I. The initial plan for the outlet blitz called for the BRG members to 'partner' with a sales team member in the trade. After the BRG member established a relationship built on common ground experiences, they would then quickly transition the potential customer to a salesperson, real time. During the debrief, the CSO had shared a different perspective. Each salesperson had their own personal sales targets and goals which had to be met. They were measured against these goals, and their performance contributed to the overall MNC's performance. The APA BRG outlet blitz he viewed as a potential distraction and could cannibalize the sales team's time, and ultimately their focus on performance goals. Understanding the potential value of targeting the Asian business customers, the CSO recommended a slightly different approach. In lieu of working side by side in the trade with the sales team, the CSO recommended the BRG members go in the trade alone, and cultivate a relationship, and if there is further interest in learning about our products and services, we could contact the sales team to call on the customer. This allowed for two things. One, it minimized disruption to the business, allowing the sales team to focus on

their sales leads and production goals. Two, it filtered out the potential Asian customers who were not interested in becoming a customer, therefore providing a stronger and 'warmer' lead to the sales team. The APA BRG adjusted the outlet blitz approach to accommodate this request.

4.15 Cycle Five: Action Planning and Implementation: Team Member Onboarding

During the months of August and September, the BRG team began to socialize the opportunity to the broader BRG membership. Clear steps were outlined along with the respective action owners (see Figure 13). The team training was scheduled. There were eight hours of content that had to be covered, but no available time to cover it in its entirety. The BRG leadership devised a plan to break the content into modules, that could be spread over eight lunch-n-learn sessions, over a three-week span. In-between sessions there would be 'homework' in the form of content reviews and exercises that reinforced the sales life cycle, and how to collaborate for value. The members who volunteered to be part of the team were not only of Asian descent. Members also included African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian members of the APA BRG. During the last session, the team members were assigned customer leads who represented their ethnicity. In total each member was assigned at least twenty leads to call on over a forty-five-day period. For those members who were not of Asian descent, they had an opportunity to pair up with an APA BRG member. The experience of going into the trade and building a relationship was not exclusive and allowed for all members to take part in the experience interacting with the customer, and sharing what the BRG is, and how it adds value to employees and to the community.

“There was a lot of personal learning. When we set up lunch and learn sessions, we had 2-3 different types of sessions. One was around the consumer base– understanding the Asian consumer, what are we buying, what our business space looks like, knowing that most Asians do dine in. The way they purchase and their purchase cycle, that set the ground for folks to learn and understand how the Asian OWNERS operate and how these customers make a selling decision.” Jill; BRG Co-Chair Strategic Initiatives

Figure 13: BRG Action Steps

Process Step	Function	Owner
1. Sign up for Orientation/Town Hall.	BRG Member	BRG Member
1. BRG Member Survey (commitment to participate, role in company, ethnicity, MU, and city within MU)	Marketplace Core Team	Yolanda
2. Lead matching (Based on ethnicity determine which leads from local markets would be assigned to BRG members, consider proximity of businesses to simplify travel time)	Marketplace Core Team	Deepak/Sarah
3. Contact People Managers for alignment	HR Leader	Sandy
4. Participate in Sales Capability Training	Marketplace Core Team	Sandy Deliver BRG Member
5. Lead Distribution (assign leads from local markets to BRG members)	Marketplace Core Team	Dhiren/ Sandy
6. Research the business prior to BRG Outlet Blitz	BRG Member	BRG Member
7. Schedule BOB Days (Every other Friday: 4-6 hours in the trade)	Marketplace Core Team	Sandy
8. Conduct Pre-Blitz Rally	National/Field Chapter Leadership	Field Chapter Captains (Presidents)
9. Conduct Blitz <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish Common Ground & Build Rapport b. Verify if customer is interested in learning more c. Capture business insights 	BRG Members	BRG Members
10. Warm transfer for leads to FSOP (through Zone Effectiveness Manager) or Region Sales (through Leads Program)	BRG Members	BRG Members
11. Contact BDL/MDM and share business insights	BRG Members	BRG Members
12. Schedule follow up calls with the business owner	BRG Members	BRG Members
13. Submit results to Field Chapter Captain(s).	BRG Members	BRG Members
14. Conduct Recurring Team Status Updates (The Thursday after the Blitz Day) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Monitor ‘Leads’ Tracking System b. Recognize achievements c. Visually share progress to date (waterfall view) d. What worked well e. What learnings can be shared f. What help is required 	Marketplace Core Team	Sonny & BRG Leadership

4.16 Cycle Five: Evaluation—Gaining ELT Sponsorship and Support

Conducting outlet blitzes called for APA BRG members to go into the trade and visit customers.

This required members to take time away from their day job, to provide discretionary effort to make

these visits. The goal was to conduct outlet blitzes over a six-week time frame. During that span, they would make a four-hour trade visit every other Friday. The people-managers of the BRG members needed to be made aware of this effort, and ultimately be supportive of these activities. A common elevator speech message was crafted for the BRG members to share with their leaders. As a unified and top-down effort, the chief HR officer (CHRO) agreed to take it a step further. With support and input from the D&I leadership team, I composed an email for the CHRO to send to the ELT of the MNC (see figure 14). This message described the purpose, goals, approach, and potential outcome of the APA BRG outlet blitz, and the time required from the BRG volunteers. In addition to the ELT, the BRG member's direct managers were copied on this message. This was a very compelling change strategy to garner support and acceptance for BRG members to participate. Not one people manager refused their employee the opportunity to add financial value back to the MNC. Amber, an HR executive, and strong advocate for the BRG, helped to facilitate the CHRO involvement with socializing the effort.

"The object was to say, 'hey business leaders, do you understand how much these groups and the people in them can do for you?' It seems like a pretty easy no brainer, let's make sure they have full visibility, and they have full buy-in in this, and they can champion it, and see the impact, and see what some driven, passionate people can do to grow your business, in a way you that you may not have been thinking about." – Amber; MNC HR Executive

Figure 14: CHRO ELT Socialization Email

Dear ELT:

The Asian Business Resource Group (BRG) is launching the 'BRG Outlet Blitz,' an initiative to create value through new business development. Members will be prospecting local businesses (~6 hrs every two weeks), usually of their own ethnicity, with the intent to transfer 'warm' leads to the Sales team. To put this into perspective, our company's typical conversion rate is 8-9%. When leads are warm transferred, it could raise our conversion rate to ~40%!

The BRG Outlet Blitz will take place from Sep – Nov 2015 and will demonstrate how a BRG can be leveraged to grow the business.

What We Need From You

As a member of the Executive Leadership Team, we ask for your support in championing this initiative within your respective organizations by providing full support, by encouraging participation.

Attached you will find background material with more insight into the Asian BRG Outlet Blitz.

Please reach out with any questions.

Thank you in advance for your support.

CHRO

4.17 Cycle Six: Action Planning and Implementation: Monitoring Progress

After we kicked off the outlet blitz in early September, I hosted a status update call every two weeks. This call was used to track progress, pinpoint best practices, discuss key lessons learned, and celebrate early wins. One best practice that was rooted in the training, but shared in our first debrief call, was how to be authentic in connecting with the customer.

"There are people out there that aren't comfortable with people that are different from them. The first thing I did was share I was from our company, and the customer was not interested. Next time I told the customer I'm Carol, and I shared that I'm Indian, and that we have a common background. There are things we have in common and let me share with you, my background. Learning how to sell, I had to share our approach. Having the cultural similarity was a way to break the ice. To have a relationship I needed to build trust. Now it didn't work with everyone, but once I shifted my approach it helped." -

Carol; Co-Chair BRG Events Planning

4.17.1 Continuous improvement

Early in the process, the team quickly identified a process improvement. The MNC has an automated lead process. Whenever an employee identifies a potential customer, they would submit the lead's information through an online portal. In theory a market development manager (MDM) would follow up with the lead within forty-eight hours. What the team experienced was something different. In fact, after submitting the lead, many of the team members would not hear back from an MDM for at least a week if it all. It appeared that the lead had entered a black hole, with no chance of getting out. As an employee, the team members are incited to use this automated lead system, as for every lead submitted, the MNC would allocate points that could be used to choose products from a catalog. To avoid the black hole experience, we reached out to the sales leaders in the territory where the outlet blitzes were underway. To enhance the outcome of establishing warm leads, that could eventually be converted into customers, the region sales leaders agreed to be a direct point of contact, who would then directly inform their MDM sales team of the potential leads. The sales leaders realized the system was not fool-proof, and potential customers could be lost through the process. Trust began to form, as these mid-level sales leaders began to see the virtue of and appreciate the efforts made by the BRG team to help them succeed in these untapped markets. In addition to this initial learning, BRG team members shared their experiences with the process, with the intent to optimize the experience for BRG team members, the sales team, and the customer. During the blitz debrief, the team members identified an opportunity to better connect with their market. Typically, sales materials were written in English. Most of the time, first generation immigrants who run businesses prefer their native language. One of the enhancements to our process was introduced by Cheryl, a BRG team member. Cheryl had experience as an outlet owner. Her family had owned local stores, and she worked for them when she was younger. Translation of our marketing materials would make a significant difference.

“The idea was originally inspired by my parents, and knowing how much attention they pay to it, I thought of them as like the potential customers. In general, my parents own businesses, and just living in the US, and Korean being their first language, anything that comes to the house (direct mail, advertisements) they don’t pay attention unless it was in Korean. I noticed when we went to customers, they were not there, and we wanted to leave something behind. And if it was in English, I know it would go to the trash. It didn’t take long; it took an hour or two to translate. We got call backs based on the translated materials. The feedback was great.” - Cheryl; BRG Member

4.18 Cycle Six: Evaluation: Outlet Blitz Results—Small Wins Demonstrate Big Potential

After six weeks of countless trade visits, and dozens of follow-up calls, the APA BRG was able to help convert prospects to customers. The process worked, and the team was excited to be part of something bigger than themselves. Out of seventy-five customers visited, twenty-five were warm transferred, and out of those twenty-five, four were converted to customers. The process was truly a team effort across our BRG members and the local sales team. These results demonstrated a sixteen percent conversion rate of warm transfers, one hundred percent higher than the MNC’s sales team’s average conversion rate. A key lesson was the previous reluctance of our Caucasian sales associates to call on Asian customers. One sales team member recounts when they attempted to make a sales call to a Korean customer, they did not know what to say, or they felt ‘unwelcomed’ when they started to introduce the possibilities of selling our product. The sale team member would never step foot into the establishment because of that fear of rejection. But after the initial meeting with one of the Korean BRG members, the potential customer was excited to learn more about selling some of our products in her outlet. The BRG member and the store owner had shared some common heritage experiences but also shared similar experiences with baking. This outlet was a bakery, and it was in a multicultural shopping center, which served a consumer base representative of the market they were in.

“This was a franchise bakery business. The franchise owner I know, but I didn’t know the franchisee store owner personally. I also had used this bakery for my daughters first birthday cake. I recall the owner of the store called me for other reasons outside of the outlet blitz. Sometimes they are looking for someone to help them just a little bit. It takes time to build the relationship. I remember having a two-hour conversation, but at the end of the day it’s about helping the community as well. You sometimes build personal relationships with these people, and that’s part of building trust.” – Cheryl; BRG Member

Another key learning was the efforts the MNC competitor had made to tap into the Asian customer market. While the APA BRG partnered with another sales associate who is responsible for a heavily-concentrated Asian demographic market, he had mentioned two Chinese restaurants—previously exclusive customers—had recently transitioned to the competitors. When asked why, he said, “Our competitor hired a Mandarin-speaking market development manager, and the rest was history.”

4.19 Cycle Six: Data Gathering and Feedback

Despite the size of the effort put forth during the outlet blitz, there were significant successes and lessons. First, the resolve to never to give up, even in the face of adversity. The BRG team members learned firsthand the realities of attempting to build relationships with potential customers. Even though from an identity standpoint, there is a common thread of ethnic background and experiences, there is still the challenge of having open dialog, and even handling objections normally experienced by the traditional sales force. The learning and accomplishments demonstrated that ethnic identifiers could lead to a positive experience that leads to a productive relationship. Second, the time spent in visiting the trade, while minimal (six hours every two weeks) in duration, still required a significant amount to move from ‘door to door,’ making the first contact. From a sustainability standpoint, it made it extremely difficult to make this approach scalable and routine, over a long period of time. This learning helped to jumpstart the BRG team in looking at customers from a trade organization perspective.

4.20 Cycle Seven: Action Planning and Implementation: Trade Organization Prospect

While the outlet blitz was underway, I worked with a subset of the team to identify ATOs the BRG could build a relationship with. The thought was to take the learnings from the outlet blitz activities and identify a scalable solution that could influence many customers, through one governing body. This would allow the team to work more efficiently, through working with a few points of contact, who represented hundreds (or even thousands) of potential customers.

Yolanda, a member of the APA BRG leadership team, had an uncle who was the president of the Deep South chapter of an ATO. This trade organization is made up of twenty-nine field chapters across North America, with over 35,000 members represented. They provide services in the form of advice, legal counsel, and supplier negotiation for its members, many of whom are recent immigrants, unfamiliar with the US law and operations. While she was aware her uncle's field chapter had a relationship with the MNC, she was not sure how strong it was, or if the relationship was held across other North American chapters. Tapping into her social network she began to learn more about the relationship.

"We learned about the challenges and the lack of relationships that existed around the nation, with our company. The strongest location was in the Deep South, where we have our MNC HQ. Once we had begun asking questions, and having two-way contact, being able to address their concerns and challenges, and just to have a dialog, where we can help maintain and share what's going on in the relationship." – Yolanda; BRG Co-Chair – Professional Development (Finance)

Through reaching out to her uncle, she discovered who the key account manager (KAM) was from the MNC. In addition, she learned that Clint, the vice president of community marketing had a long-standing relationship with the ATO's "international" leadership team. The ATO spans the US market as well as Canada, earning the international designation.

Yolanda and I began to analyze the relationship both at a local and international level. Julio, the KAM for the account, was happy to share the experience he had and the relationship he developed with the local chapter of the ATO. Julio took over the local account two years prior. When he took over, the sales volume was lower and the level of attention to the ATO leadership and their members was lacking. Julio quickly identified opportunities to better track the member's performance and rebuild the relationship to be both a key supplier and a community partner. As a trade organization, the ATO focused on giving back to the community. Part of their strategy was to partner with key suppliers to help fundraise and participate in charitable events, hosted by the ATO. Julio established an agreement where the MNC would participate in the ATO's annual golf tournament, contribute like-kind product at their fundraising events, and provide funds in the form of scholarship, awarded during ATO's annual scholarship banquet dinner. During the two years that Julio had taken over the account, the ATO sales and profitability improved by over twenty percent, and the ATO chapter members received tiered pricing rebates. The tiered pricing model was negotiated based on volume pricing, something that was typically used for large retail customers and/or multi-outlet food service restaurants.

After learning about the hands-on relationship, the MNC had with the field chapter, I reached out to Clint, the VP of community marketing, to learn more about the history of the ATO relationship at the international level. Clint shared how ATO was at one time supported by a Korean sales leader within the MNC. The Korean sales leader had retired and handed the higher order relationship to Clint.

"It has been an interesting journey, that started many years ago. Joseph Yang, a Sales Account Executive, was focused on the Asian community. At that time, given that I was also doing some things with the multi-cultural community, we interacted on many occasions. I also was having a platform with our African American associates and some of our Latin associations. We crossed paths quite a bit. As Joseph prepared for retirement, he was looking for a place to carry on the relationship with the ATO. He asked me if I would step in temporarily, and continue the relationship after his retirement, until a new

person was appointed. The temporary assignment has now spanned the last for 15 years. Over the time I became more engaged with the local chapters and international chapters and helped try to continue some of the work Joseph did.” – Clint; MNC Executive

Clint had participated in some of the ATO’s international conferences, sharing new product and commercialization strategies that would benefit their organization. In addition, they would call on Clint when they needed help and support within their local field chapters. For example, after the summer of 2015’s police beating and subsequent death of an African American in Baltimore, mass riots broke out in the city. Establishments were looted and, in some cases, burned down, many of which were Korean owned and operated. The local field chapter president had requested financial support from the MNC to help with their members as they were rebuilding their outlets.

Clint was transparent and expressed that given his day job, supporting large community-related campaigns (such as the Special Olympics, US Park and Receptions summits, and other not-for-profit endeavors) was difficult for him to provide coverage to the entire ATO international organization.

Using Julio’s relationship with the local chapter as a best practice, the APA BRG set out to analyze how to replicate the success in the Deep South region, across all the ATO. For my day job, I was physically working in the Mid-Atlantic region during this period. While I was there, I set out to analyze the current sales trends with the ATO customers in that region. The sales were sub-par, compared to the Deep South. Year-over-year sales were down by fifteen percent, and a significant number of customers stopped purchasing direct from the MNC altogether. The BRG saw this as an opportunity to pursue further, and with the support of Clint, Julio, and the Deep South ATO chapter leadership, we collectively established a plan to extend the “olive branch” to the ATO Mid-Atlantic chapter, and to the ATO International leadership.

At this point in time, trust began to extend across internal boundaries as well as the through the external relationships. Transforming data into insights, coupled with the socialization of different

leaders (Julio with Clint), the BRG had built credibility as a competent resource and a strategic partner which could help improve and enhance an underrepresented customer relationship. This trust fueled the information and economic exchange (Naphiet & Ghosal, 1998) required to build out the relationship with ATO. Clint was onboard to finance a contribution to the Mid-Atlantic Chapter's annual scholarship banquet, as a show of good will.

"The scholarship was extra, I usually support the Deep South and the International groups, but I don't normally support the Mid-Atlantic group. I thought it was important to re-establish the relationship, because there was a gap when the territory transitioned from the previous ownership." – **Clint; MNC**

Executive

I scheduled a meeting to socialize the opportunity with Julio's direct manager, Ed. I asked Ed if Julio could attend the ATO scholarship banquet in Maryland, to represent the MNC. The goal would be for Julio to help nurture the relationship, given his extensive experience in growing the Deep South field chapter of the ATO and to be able to discuss his own operating approach. Ed realized the potential this could have for the greater good of the MNC, even though Julio would not get potential 'credit' for helping to sell in a new account outside of his market. Alex Yoo, the Deep South ATO chapter secretary and Julio's primary point of contact, was a proponent of extending the ATO relationship across chapters. Alex agreed to attend the Mid-Atlantic ATO chapter scholarship banquet to be a strong advocate for the existing relationship his chapter had forged with the MNC. I explained the business opportunity to Julio's direct manager and was able to establish good will and trust to attend the ATO event in Mid-Atlantic and cover the cost of Alex's travel and expenses to the event. A significant amount of trust between Julio, his leader, Alex, and I, was further developed. In addition, Yolanda had requested a travel stipend from her management. Traveling for activities that were not directly tied to your job function, was rare. Yolanda was able to gain approval without hesitation.

“I shared with my boss, and his manager, that this is an opportunity to improve customer relations, and customer agreements. They were both supportive of me supporting the growth of the company, and that’s how I pitched it. They were completely behind this, especially with the value I bring, leveraging my own ethnicity to connect with the ATO leaders.” – Yolanda; BRG Leader (Finance)

4.20.1 The Scholarship Banquet weekend

During the weekend of January 9, 2016, several APA BRG leaders and MNC sales associates traveled from the MNC HQ to the Mid-Atlantic region to attend the MD ATO scholarship banquet. Before the visit, Clint provided guidance and advice to us on building the relationship. The most important advice provided was to be transparent as possible.

“Tell them you represent the Asian Business Resource Group for the MNC. Explain to them that you’re a volunteer organization that helps to develop its member base through education and community outreach. Also explain that you are a conduit between the customers and consumers that you represent.” – Clint – MNC Executive

His message was directly on target. Previously, I learned that being transparent, and fact-based regarding motive is vital in building the first layer of trust in the relationship. Applying this recommendation was critical for any future success with ATO.

Upon arrival in the Mid-Atlantic region, the MNC team, along with Alex Yoo from the Deep South ATO chapter, met the ATO Mid-Atlantic and International delegates for lunch at a local Korean restaurant. That first initial lunch, there were twelve of us sitting around the table, getting to know each other better. Included in this group was the president of the ATO International. There were many stories told about their families, their business, and their start in the US. The ATO delegates were a mixed group of first- and second-generation Koreans. I personally was able to build a bond with one of the second-generation leaders, Mr. Jack Young, a liquor store owner. We both grew up in the same state, we both had kids of the same age, and we both had a tie in the liquor store business. My father had owned and

operated a liquor store after he immigrated to the US. This first step lunch was the proverbial ice breaker that helped build a sense of comfort between all parties. In the Korean culture, there is a sense of quid pro quo taking care of each other that is honored between members.

“Having gone to multiple international ATO meetings, I met hire up leaders of your business, like Mr. Clint, but we hadn’t met people that were local, calling on Washington DC. At this point, I was still not sure if there is anything there, talk is cheap. Sometimes you talk, but not much comes out of it.” – Jack;

ATO Mid-Atlantic chapter VP

As a gesture of good faith, I treated for lunch. I did this not only because I called for the luncheon, but because I realized this gesture could go a long way in cultivating a relationship.

Later that evening was the award banquet. When the MNC team arrived at the banquet hall, the President of ATO International immediately grabbed me and started to introduce me to other ATO delegates. That moment felt very real, relaxed, and would lead to significant networking across the ATO chapters. Their primary purpose was to ask for a donation toward their annual scholarship banquet. Each field chapter hosts their own scholarship banquet to give back to recipients in their respective communities. They see the MNC as a financial resource that could provide discretionary funds to worthy causes. I provided my information and took their contact information for future reference.

During the event there were several distinguished guests who presented on the strength and endurance of the ATO partnership with the community, highlighting the importance of giving back. The key part was toward the end, during the scholarship awards distribution. Each nominee was called onto the stage, and was handed a large life size check, presented by the MNC donating the funds. The APA BRG was asked to present on behalf of the MNC, to the scholarship recipient. This moment of giving back felt extremely gratifying for the APA BRG, as they were able to represent the MNC in a community focused event, providing need-based funds to a deserving student, and ultimately strengthening a relationship with a community partner, who happens to be a potential customer. The evening turned

out excellent, and we were able to schedule one final luncheon with the ATO delegates, before the MNC team headed back to HQ.

“I think from a company perspective, it’s great that we can have more than a relationship with the trade organization, but there is a bigger end to it, and that’s by helping to support their local communities.

They value that as it’s important to them to give back to their own community. Without the support and sponsorship, I don’t think they would be able to give back to the many students they sponsor.” – Yolanda

– BRG Co-Chair – Professional Development (Finance)

The next day during lunch, I was transparent in what our next steps would need to be. Applying the advice given by Clint, I reiterated what the BRG is, what it is not, and explained that to move forward we will need a list of their member base. The membership list is a critical step in understanding what type of customers the ATO Mid-Atlantic members could be. The list would be analyzed by a sales team to identify what type of commercial program could be created to accommodate the various channels of business within the ATO.

4.21 Cycle Seven: Evaluation—Knowledge Exchange

As a point of reflection, the list would be a symbolic gesture, demonstrating trust had been formed, with this exchange of information. The ATO Mid-Atlantic chapter leadership agreed to share their membership information, and within a matter of two weeks, they sent their list for the APA BRG to analyze. Historically the ATO had never shared their member information to the MNC. The trust that was established in that short time frame, underscored the value of blending BRG members with sales team members, in re-establishing a relationship. This act was significant, as this small step would prove to lead to bigger opportunities in the long term.

4.22 Cycle Seven: Data Gathering and Feedback: Socializing the Experience

The APA BRG had accomplished a tremendous amount of work in the marketplace during the fall of 2015. While the customer conversions were incremental, the relationships developed were

significant. Both inside and outside the MNC, these newly formed relationships opened more doors for the BRG to expand their credibility as a business lever, and ultimately help the business grow. To recognize the BRG team members who participated in the outlet blitz, and who contributed to the ATO experience, the BRG leadership team and I created a debrief presentation to be shared with the president of the MNC North American business, the executive sponsor of the BRG, the global chief diversity officer and his staff, and the supervisors of the BRG team members. We constructed a panel discussion format, which would put the team members who did most of the work, on stage, front and centered.

“Other than scary, because I had to speak, it was really a cool experience, being able to share with the leaders the impact of our efforts. It was not costly for the company at all, for us to go be ourselves, using the relationships we have as associates. Using our own ethnicity and to take that and help the company out was very cool. It’s not always that a company will take an inventory of what people have, and see how people within the organization can help, but with a little initiative, some organization, some mission, and the willingness of people, you have a beautiful thing that is created.” – Yolanda; BRG Co-Chair Professional Development (Finance)

This was the most effective way to honor the team, as I could not provide any bonuses or merit increase for the work they performed. But I made sure they were recognized, and their direct managers were aware of how important their contribution and efforts were, and the significant value they added to the business.

“I think the recognition was important for these type of initiatives for the Company. The diversity of the population is going to significantly change. Consumer preferences are going to change. Our President was very excited about giving the support and giving the sponsorship to the group to drive the right discussion.” – Dhiren; BRG Leader (Finance)

Each member received a commemorative certificate of achievement signed by the ELT and presented to them by the president of the MNC. The intention was for the team members to get honored through social reinforcement. The byproduct the BRG leadership team was looking for was continued support and a maintained level of discretionary effort.

“I was surprised in what I was walking into. When I walked in there, it felt like we did something monumental for the company. It was not just accomplishment for the BRG but for the company.” – Carol; BRG Co-Chair Events Planning (Finance)

At the end of the event, the President of the MNC, North America had shared his perspective on the work and all the effort that went into building relationships in the trade. He was excited for the opportunity and pleased the BRG was getting involved in business development.

“It helped the BRG members, it helped them understand that senior leadership actually believe that this thing is important. From those senior leaders around the table who don’t get to engage with our company President or other executives, it was an opportunity for them to demonstrate their own commitment to diversity and engage in a unique way. And even if you are a senior person in corporate in North America, a lot of times you don’t get the opportunity, in that environment, to spend time with the company President. That is another dimension of their professional life, that is not insignificant. Because

this thing went on multi year, they had a lot of opportunity to get face time with senior leaders, as did the BRG leaders, with people you don't normally get to engage with. And that really helped to cement (the mortar between the bricks), of this whole thing. Because without commitment from the senior leaders and that continued interaction, you would never have that buy in that you did.” – Ron; MNC

Executive (BRG Executive Sponsor)

4.23 Cycle Eight: Action Planning & Implementation—ATO Relationship Building

After debriefing on the success and learning of the outlet blitz, the BRG leadership team reflected on our next steps. Keeping the momentum going, while at the same time operating more efficiently to scale the BRG efforts was a significant opportunity. What we learned from the outlet blitz experience was that building relationships with the ATO would have a higher return and a sustainable partnership that was scalable. While there was considerable learning that took place in the trade, the reality is the time commitment was a challenge, and the rate of conversions, while impressive, was not as significant as the trade organization opportunities. Coming out of the leadership debrief, the BRG marketplace team identified a way to strengthen the ATO relationship further. In the spirit of honoring the ATO leaders while at the same time continuing to build momentum in the customer development space, the BRG leadership team brainstormed how we could use May Asian Heritage month as a platform to cultivate the relationship further. The plan was to invite the ATO International president and other ATO field chapter presidents and their families to HQ, to participate in a panel discussion, on stage with the MNC ELT. The BRG would be ‘killing two birds with one stone.’ Providing the cultural programming for this staple BRG event while honoring a potential customer was an innovative way to extend the olive branch further. After experiencing the marketplace debrief and recognition ceremony, the president of North America was one hundred percent onboard to support and participate in this panel discussion, on stage with the ATO leaders.

“I think that your engagement with the President of North America, early on, helped him understand the collective. Our company deals with big customers very well, with small customers not so much. And so when you look at it from a general perception, you think there is a Korean grocery store, in a community, that does nickel and dime businesses, and we don’t deal with it. The challenge with our system is showing the scope and potential within the ATO. This is how many of us we are, and this is our collective buying power, and this is how we will help you target urban diverse communities. This was the beauty in educating the system that we are not dealing with one off moms and pops.” – Clint; MNC

Executive

4.23.1 ATO Tradeshow—Cultivating the relationship

Each year the ATO sponsors an international tradeshow. The tradeshow brings forth vendors from Asia, who supply members of the ATO with authentic goods from the home countries. In addition, US-based vendors also participate to market the various existing and new products and services they offer. The leadership teams from the twenty-nine different ATO chapters across North America attend this event to conduct formal ATO business matters. They also use it as an opportunity to socialize and strengthen the relationships across and within the various chapters. As an entry point to continue to build trust with the ATO, Jill, Yolanda, Clint, and I discussed the value of participating in this event.

“Attending the event, we would be able to meet people for a second time, and be able to meet others, that didn’t have relationships with our company, and we would seek to understand what their relationships was. Meeting in a casual environment, would help me understand why or why not they are customers of our company.”, Yolanda – BRG Co-Chair – Professional Development (Finance).

Participation in trade shows like these, would normally involve the MNC’s sales department to attend. But there was a clear value-add that would continue to strengthen relations between the MNC

and the ATO. Clint had viewed it as having a diverse representation of MNC employees, instead of the traditional Caucasian demographic who normally attend these events.

"I think the big part of having everyone one there, is representation. A couple of years ago, the President of the International ATO, said to me, "we like you, but aren't there any Asians who work at the MNC?" The idea of having the BRG there shows that the company is diverse, and we have people who understand who you are. This was a way for the broader group, that we have people at the MNC, who can help me or people of Asian descent I can call on.", **Clint, MNC Executive.**

The ATO tradeshow was held in the Northeast. Given that our day job was not focused on sales, Jill, Yolanda, and I would need special approval to travel to this event. Like the ATO Mid-Atlantic chapter's scholarship banquet, we would need approval from our direct leadership to participate in this event. Since we had just demonstrated the impact the BRG can have on business outcomes, there was a consistent and sustained level of support to advocate activity and discretionary spend for BRG members. Jill's perspective and experience with her management was very positive.

"It wasn't a hard sell to the organization because it came off the heels of the marketplace blitz. The business understood the ATO opportunity and that this is a nationwide opportunity.", **Jill, BRG Chair - Strategic Initiatives.**

And for Yolanda, her finance leadership were strong supporters who could see the clear value her efforts were bringing to the company and to her own development.

"The managers were supportive of me. There weren't too many challenges. They knew what was happening in the background was something big, something bigger than what they can see. I had a really supportive manager and management team that supported me." – **Yolanda, BRG Co-Chair – Professional Development (Finance).**

Gaining trust within the company, by demonstrating competency through our analysis and business development, underscored that the BRG goals and objectives, which aligned with the business goals and objectives, further enhancing the trust developed within the MNC. (Naphiet & Ghosal, 1998)

With clearance to attend the event, Jill, Yolanda, and I joined Clint in the Northeast. Our Northeast sales team were on-site in the trade show hall, marketing the new product lines that could be sold in the ATO member stores. Alongside our MNC sales representatives, we did see our competitors displaying their products and services as well. At the end of the first day, there was a banquet dinner. During this dinner the ATO leadership honored their member base as well as the partner suppliers who were in attendance. Our MNC sales team, along with our BRG members (Jill & Yolanda) stayed throughout the evening to participate in this banquet. Our competitors, on the other hand, did not. This subtle difference was clearly noticed by the ATO leadership.

“When we have a group dinner or banquet like this, most of our partners are not there, unless they are sponsoring it for us. To see your sales team, alongside your BRG team members stay back, it was a good feeling, like there is an authentic relationship there.” – Jack ATO VP – ATO Mid-Atlantic chapter

4.24 Cycle Eight: Evaluation—Tradeshow Experience

During the tradeshow, we met other leaders across the ATO chapters. One was from the southeast. Charles had just formed the ATO Southeast chapter, with over thirty members. He had experience working with MNCs like us, as he ran a similar trade organization. When we met for the first time, he shared his view on the value of having a collaborative partnership with his suppliers.

“When we met, I wasn’t sure if your BRG can help us out or not. But sometimes when we try to make a relationship with other companies, they think we are too small. Getting the opportunity to meet you and the other BRG leaders, it gave us an idea of how we can potentially work together.” – Charles – President ATO – Southeast chapter.

During this event we formally invited Charles, the president of the ATO International, and the president & vice president of the ATO Mid-Atlantic chapter to join us at our HQ for May Asian Heritage Month. Clint viewed our participation in the tradeshow to be a significant affect in fortifying our relationship.

“That was a powerful statement to have you come out and meet the leadership from the various organizations across the US and Canada. So you can’t underestimate the impact of having you there. I know there was conversations about having a greater connection, with the new Southeast chapter, and that was really good.” – Clint – MNC Executive

4.25 Cycle Nine: Action Planning and Implementation—May Asian Heritage Month

After solidifying the presence and participation of the president of MNC NA during the May Asian Heritage event, to honor the ATO, the next big hurdle was funding. The BRGs are allocated a budget to cover events and programming, typically tied to cultural events. As a gesture of good will, I offered to cover the ATO leader’s expenses associated with traveling to MNC HQ to be present during the event. In addition, the BRG wanted to host the ATO delegates at a local baseball game, in the MNC’s dedicated suite in the ballpark. The travel expenses along with the pre-event activities would carry incremental costs. Given Clint’s stature in the organization, and his relationship with the ATO, I asked him if he would be willing to fund through his department discretionary budget. The total cost was equivalent to thirty percent of the BRG budget. Based on the trust developed, and the significant accomplishments in the marketplace, Clint did not hesitate to contribute from his cost center, the monies required to sponsor the event. This was the first time during my tenure as BRG leader that we received funds in this amount, from an outside party, independent of the D&I office.

“This wasn’t a selfless act on my part. The relationship with the ATO was a portfolio that I managed. What you were doing was helping me. Our own self-interest flows to the top quite often. It made sense for me to help in any way I could. It was in a piece of the world I had some familiarity with. What you are doing is a great benefit for the company. There was trust there, and we walked the path, I understood and believe what you were doing, and there was no reason to hesitate whatsoever.” – Clint; MNC

Executive

The night of the baseball game brought a diverse group of MNC team members together to honor the ATO leadership team. This event was an informal activity that allowed BRG members, sales team members, and the ATO leaders get to know one another at a personal level. On hand from the MNC were ten BRG leadership team members, the local sales leadership team, and the Southeast region sales leadership team, representing the market where the new ATO chapter was formed. Sam, a sales manager from the Southeast region, flew in to attend the May Asian Heritage Month event.

“What I liked about it, it was a very festive atmosphere, it let people show their true selves and let their guard down.” – Sam – Sales Manager Southeast Region.

Charles, the president of the newly formed Southeast ATO chapter was delighted to be part of the ball game activity.

“Since I didn’t have that much experience with the MNC, when I was there you treated us good. This was like an icebreaker, because we knew some people, primarily from the other ATO chapters, but not all. And we were able to get to know each other better. We thought you treated us good, and it was positive way to do it.” – Charles – President Southeast ATO.

As the night had progressed, people were getting to know each other both within the MNC and between the MNC and ATO leaders. There was a discovery of commonalities that were ethnicity-related, but also based on common backgrounds, hobbies, and general life interests. The event helped to put the team at ease and was a good way to lead into the formal panel discussion, scheduled for the next day. Carol, who participated in the Marketplace Blitz, co-planned this May Asian Heritage panel discussion with the ATO, viewed this night at the ballpark as a building block experience.

“One of the things I noticed at the ball game, there was someone there that did not smile a lot, and at the end of the night he was belly laughing. To build a relationship, you have to build trust. That ice breaker we got to know each other, and that night it’s like we turned into one team. The next day, it felt like we know them for a while, just so that everyone got to know everyone’s personality, and that we could build trust, and it could help the relationship going forward.” – Carol – BRG Co-Chair, Events

Planning

4.25.1 May Asian Pacific Islander Month—The day of the event

On the day of the panel discussion event, there were multiple moving parts to make this a success. Sanjeev, the co-chair for the BRG Events committee, was responsible for co-planning and executing this event. Ensuring the ATO guests had a warm welcome into the MNC headquarters was a tremendous responsibility.

“The very first thing we made sure that the senior leaders were available to welcome the ATO leaders coming to HQ. When they arrived at HQ, we made sure they had special parking, and that the senior leaders were there to let them know their business to us, was equal to us, just like a Wendy’s or Walgreens. We even had their associations name on the teleprompter, welcoming them as distinguished guests, to our company.” – Sanjeev – BRG Co-Chair – Events Planning (Operations).

To ensure it was an authentic experience for both the MNC employees and the ATO honored guests, the BRG had the lunch catered from a local ethnic restaurant, who happened to a member of the local ATO chapter.

“I think our unique background played to our strength. If you removed all of the involvement of the BRG, it would not have been the same event. We consistently made sure that we made it as good for them as possible. We insisted we brought in food from a Korean restaurant. Those small details made a big impact on the ATO’s mind, that we are genuine.” – Sanjeev – Co-chair BRG Events Planning

The panel on stage included four ATO leaders from the Mid-Atlantic and from the Deep South, the president of the MNC NA, Clint (as the long-standing partner with the ATO International), and Ron, (the APA BRG executive sponsor, and moderator for the event). Before this event the BRG leadership team met to brainstorm the context to be covered during the event. What they wanted to accomplish

was ensuring there was a clear outcome that satisfied the learning experience for the company participants, the social experience for our guests from the ATO, and the potential business opportunity that could be forged between the ATO and the company. The run of show for the May Asian Heritage Month was carefully crafted with questions that focused on three distinct sections:

Section 1: Tell us about your experience immigrating to the US. What trials and adversity did you face?

Section 2: What is the ATO? What services do you provide to your member base? How does it work across field chapters?

Section 3: How can the MNC help you grow your business? What would you like to see in the partnership going forward?

4.26 Cycle Nine: Evaluation: Candid Conversations Leads to Breakthroughs

The panel discussion was a huge hit. The ATO members were entertaining, Clint was very informative in the history of the relationship, and the ATO Mid-Atlantic chapter was candid as to why the relationship experienced challenges in prior years. Jack, the VP of the ATO Mid-Atlantic chapter, was someone I got to know during the Mid-Atlantic scholarship banquet in January. He was vocal about his experience, and he was open to resetting the experience moving forward.

“There wasn’t much of a relationship with the ATO and the MNC. Yes, I was getting deliveries from the MNC at the time. I would get a salesperson every two weeks. Somewhere along the way, that salesperson had dropped off and another salesperson was assigned to me. Several months had went by and I was confused as my new salesperson wasn’t showing up. I called them and asked who my salesperson is, and I then I called him, and I told them I am Jack, and I asked “Cortez” to come. He came to my store that very same day, and he said you guys don’t have an order history, I told him I don’t have an order history as you’ve never been here to take my order.” – Jack Vice President ATO Mid-Atlantic chapter

The dialog was candid, and at some points uncomfortable as it highlighted gaps in the previous relationship.

“When the ATO President of the Mid-Atlantic chapter talked about some of the issues in the past, it was a lot about communications. Part of me thought it was a cultural barrier. They wanted more face to face, we have a lot of customers that when we go to the market and sell, sometimes sales will have a bias for people they get along with, and those who buy more, vs. you have to treat customers with a personalized touch.” – Carol – BRG Co-Chair Events Planning.

The candid conversation became a turning point in the relationship, as it opened the opportunity to reset expectations and begin with a fresh focus. Team leaders from the MNC described what they would do to enhance the relationship, provided they got that opportunity. In addition, the president from the new ATO Southeast chapter was in the audience and he had expressed interest in further developing a relationship with the MNC. The President of the MNC NA assured him that he and his members would be taken care of and would benefit from a formal relationship. In addition, the market unit vice president from the Southeast region, Bill Johnson, stood up and made a formal pledge, in front of the MNC senior leadership and the ATO’s senior leadership, that he will ensure that their every need will be addressed, and that they can count on our company to be a reliable strategic partner.

“If I can add to what our President of MNC NA just shared, from a local level, to drive sustainability and the relationship, I am here and my local leaders are here, to ensure we’ll be here to support you as you grow in the marketplace, and we will ensure there is a constant connection back to HQ and the other chapters so you are receiving the best of the best from the system, that’s my commitment to you.” – Bill – MUVP Southeast Region

4.27 Cycle Nine: Data Gathering and Feedback: Formal Signing of a Customer Market Agreement

One month later, in June of 2016, the local sales leadership in the Southeast region invited the ATO leaders and members from that field chapter to visit the local distribution center. The local sales team catered a lunch and prepared presentations which highlighted the benefits of buying products from the MNC directly, and the service levels they would receive.

“We welcomed them with open arms, let them meet our operations team, sales folks, mingle, and get to know each other. We put together a nice presentation on what we can do for them. That helped them let their guard down, and it let them know that we are here for them, and that we would treat them like any other chain. And we will help them get them off the ground to help them make money for their stores.”

Sam – Sales Manager Southeast Region.

Historically, the ATO members in the Southeast chapter had purchased product from the MNC, or from FLOs who would distribute MNC product. The difference is there was no formal Customer Marketing Agreement (CMA). The CMA would unlock the door to provide value and discounts the ATO would not normally receive. In addition, it would further strengthen the supplier/customer relationship, collaborating to support the needs of the community. The experience from the ATO Southeast chapter side was that of gratitude and honor. Charles, the president of the ATO Southeast, explained the experience and the outcome coming out of the site visit.

“When we went there, they put up a welcome sign in Korean language. It was a real good impression from our group. We had a great time at the meeting, we took a group picture and placed it in our PPT to share with our local members, and we wear t-shirts from the MNC, to demonstrate our relationship.” –

Charles, President ATO Southeast chapter

Within two weeks, the ATO Southeast chapter had signed a CMA with the local sales team. The ATO chapter included 38 stores, and the potential to generate a significant increase in sales volume and revenue.

In July, the D&I Office suggested our BRG apply for an award which recognizes BRGs for the ability to drive impact in the workplace and the marketplace. Typically, over one thousand BRGs apply for this annual award. That year there were 1,270 applicants. ERGs, BRGs and Diversity Councils complete and submit an online application of sixty-seven questions that evaluates their impact on their organization.

Award applicants are evaluated on contributions and achievements in the following four categories:

1. Demonstrated results
2. Demonstrated management commitment
3. Measurement and accountability
4. Communication and education

The APA BRG had made the top twenty-five. The sequence and order would be announced during a banquet dinner, which is part of the host organization's annual ERG conference. To recognize their BRG members for their efforts, the managers of BRG team members covered the travel costs to attend the conference, and to accept the award in person.

The APA BRG earned the ranking as #3 overall (out of 1,276) for leading change and driving business impact.

4.27.1 Lewinian learning model

As a point of self-reflection, I looked back throughout the A/R cycles, and I identified concrete experiences which helped shape my thinking about the A/R outcomes (Lorenzo, 2010). First, I noticed that strong relationships were formed between BRG team members, sales teams, marketing teams, D&I

leadership, and with external stakeholders and partners. This relationship was formed because everyone was working toward a common goal. This common goal started with the BRGs business plan, with the introduction of a marketplace objective. This translated into a formal business case, with goals which aligned with the business. By demonstrating the BRG meant business, and could act with purpose and effectiveness, this led to a significant alignment, and ultimately a partnership which led to collaborative behaviors. Therefore, a significant amount of trust was formed between all parties involved.

Second, demonstrating innovation using data insights, and celebrating small wins in the marketplace established confidence, praise, and support by the ELT, direct managers, and peers within and between BRGs. Leveraging this support was critical for gaining ongoing sponsorship. This experience underscored how BRGs can be a hub for innovation (Welbourne & McLaughlin, 2013) that helps the company solve business problems, and ultimately add significant value back to the organization.

Third, BRG team members established confidence by performing extraordinary activities to support organizational performance. Exposure and recognition by senior leaders helped to sustain and positively reinforce individual team member performance.

Using the insights gained from this self-reflective exercise, I created a series of questions to use during an interview with the A/R participants. To further expand on the learnings gained through the A/R cycle, the results from these interview questions are used in the grounded theory analysis discussed in chapter five.

The next chapter will provide a deeper analysis into the quasi-experimental design and the grounded theory approach, which complement the results from the A/R life cycle.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section provides an in-depth analysis based on the methodology described in chapter three. This includes the two methods of data capture conducted both during and after the A/R life cycle. The first method is the quasi-experimental design conducted during the first year the ATO was under a CMA with the MNC, and post A/R cycle 9. The second analysis was the grounded theory research activities which captured insights representing different intervals throughout the A/R life cycle.

The research findings are presented to address the research questions established in chapter three. The first set of questions addressed how BRGs can be used to enable organizational performance and growth. The second set of questions addressed the individual BRG team member(s), and how a BRG can enable individual team member(s) confidence and professional growth.

5.1 Quasi-Experimental Design Results

After the APA BRG cultivated a relationship with the Southeast chapter of the ATO, the ATO signed a formal CMA with the MNC. As a result, the relationship strengthened between the ATO and the MNC, where community engagement and outreach were fostered, and clear expectations of customer service levels were established.

Other field chapters of the ATO were purchasing products from the MNC, or through third party distributors, which allowed the MNC to track KPIs. These indicators include sales volume, revenue, and gross profit. However, the other ATO field chapters were not under a formal CMA, nor were they engaged with the APA BRG to help cultivate the relationship.

By virtue of having access to volume, revenue, and gross profit data for a two-year period, one of the ATO field chapters in a separate market unit became a natural control group, as the APA BRG was not involved in building a relationship in that market unit location (West ATO chapter). There were originally thirty-eight stores under the Southeast ATO chapter. There were fifteen stores under the West ATO chapter (control group). Before running statistical analysis against these two populations, I

performed a Grubb's outlier test to detect extreme outliers that could lead to a type II error. A type II error occurs when the null hypothesis is falsely accepted (i.e., the results demonstrate a false negative). The Grubb's test (Grubbs, 1969) is used when there is potential for one or more outliers that could skew an approximate normal distribution (Stefansky, 1972). The outlier test identified two outlets with extreme values, within the Southeast ATO chapter data. After gaining insight from the Southeast ATO president, he shared there were 'special cause' variations in the two outlet's year-over-year performance. Special causes are unanticipated fluctuations in what you would expect, owing to a unique phenomenon, not commonly known in the process (Deming, 1975). The ATO president confirmed that with the first store, there was a change in ownership, which led to a steep operational learning curve. The second store experienced roadwork construction adjacent to the building, limiting direct access and unfortunately reducing customer visits during that period. Therefore, I removed the two outliers from the Southeast ATO data to avoid a type II error, bringing the number of Southeast outlets analyzed to thirty-six.

Figure 15 provides a high-level result of the performance outcomes generated by the two ATO chapters. This quantitative outlook helps to strengthen the case made throughout the A/R life cycle, underscoring the value of building relationships within the MNC and between the ATO and the MNC. The APA BRG established relationships based on common ground and a shared narrative of ethnic and cultural experience. The results demonstrate the tangible value the BRGs bring to the MNC. In contrast, when this APA BRG relationship is not leveraged across different MUs which share the same unique customer base, the risk of sales erosion prevails, demonstrating a negative impact on business performance. Finally, the year-over-year aggregate company performance in North America was captured, to illustrate the growth or neutral performance (i.e., sales, volume, and gross profit), at the company level.

Figure 15: Year-over-Year Performance Measures

Periods Measured for ATO performance:

P1: August 2015- July 2016

P2 August 2016- July 2017

Period Measured for North America

August 2016-December 2017 Y-O-Y Comparison

	YOY Unit Sales Volume	YOY Revenue	YOY Gross Profit
ATO outlets in Southeast (MLR)	↑ 12%	↑ 8%	↑ 6%
ATO outlets in West (W) Control group 2	↓ -6%	↓ -6%	↓ -5%
North America ³	0%	↑ 4%	0%

The remaining parts of this section illustrate the statistical analysis performed to validate the significant difference in performance before and after the APA BRG intervention.

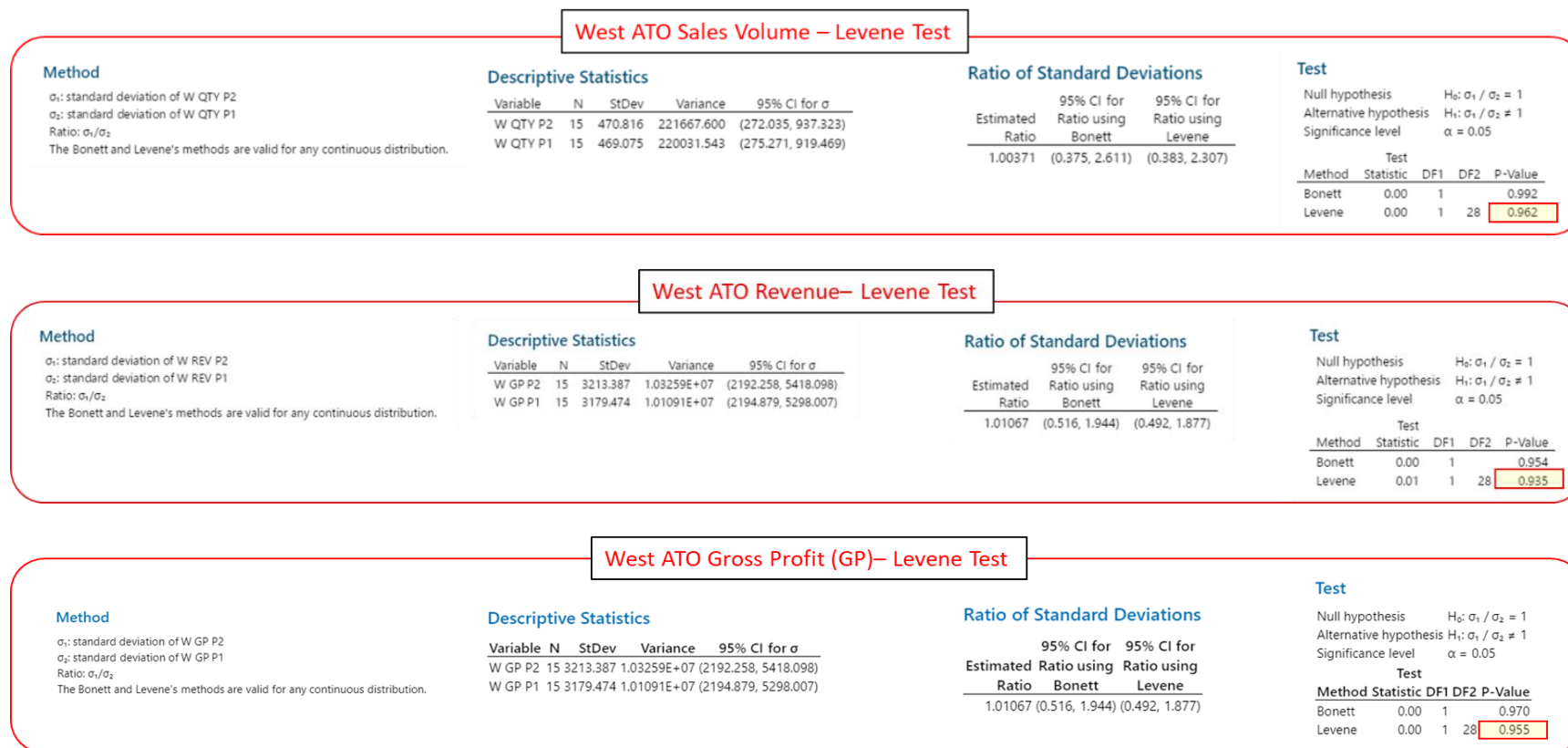
5.2 Levene’s Test

Levene’s test (Levene, 1960) is used to assess variance homogeneity, a precondition to run a parametric test such as the paired t-test. If the significance from this test is less than 0.05, then variances are significantly different and parametric tests cannot be used.

5.2.1 Levene's Test – West ATO chapter (control group)

Figure 16 shows the results of the Levene's test for the control group, the West ATO chapter.

Figure 16: West ATO Levene's Test

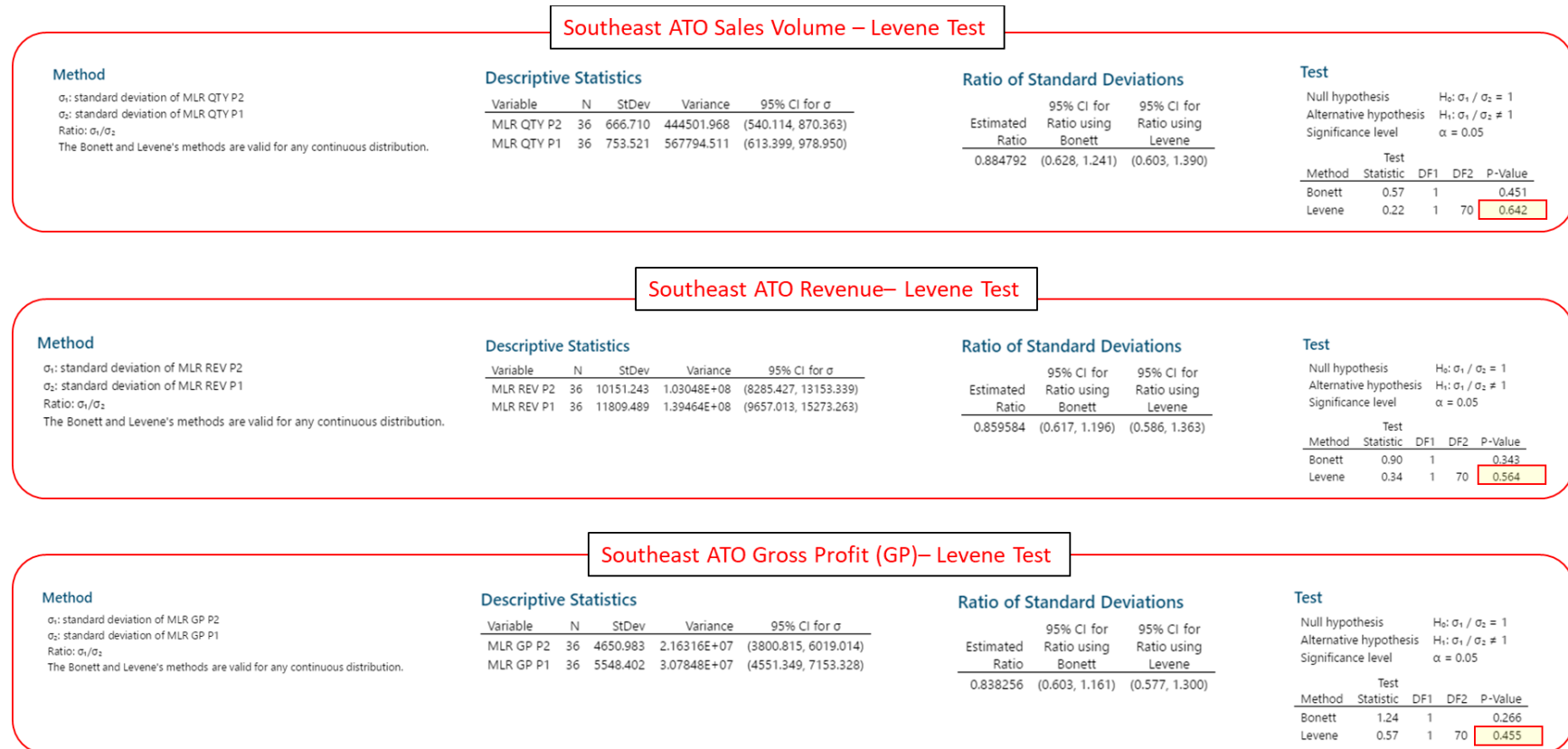


The fifteen ATO Stores in period 1 (P1) and period 2 (P2) in the West (W) chapter demonstrate no statistically significant difference in variance, and therefore a parametric t-test can be used.

5.2.2 Levene's Test – Southeast ATO chapter

Figure 17 shows the results of the Levene's test for the Southeast ATO chapter.

Figure 17: Southeast ATO Levene's test



The thirty-six ATO Stores in period 1 (P1) and period 2 (P2) of the Southeast chapter demonstrate no statistically significant difference in variance, for quantity, revenue, and gross profit, and therefore a parametric t-test can be used.

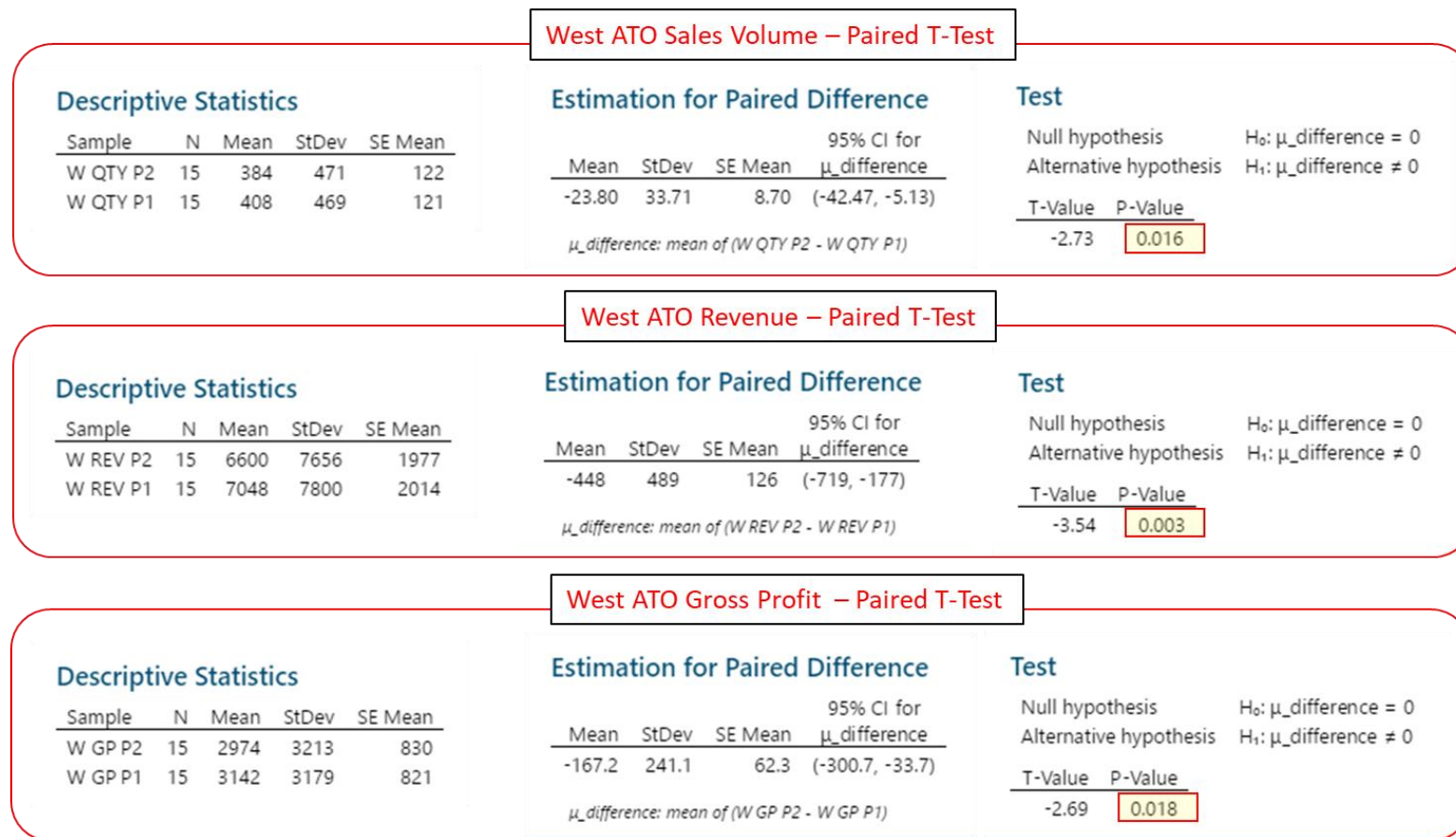
5.3 Paired T-Test

A paired t-test is a parametric test used to determine significant differences between the means on a paired observation (Rietveld and van Hout, 2015). This comparison can be done on the same sample, at two different points in time, to demonstrate a before and after effect.

5.3.1 Paired T-Test – ATO West chapter (control group)

The paired t-test tests for difference in the means between period 1 vs. period 2. The null hypothesis states there is no statistically significant difference between the means. If the p-value is $<.05$, we reject the null hypothesis (see figure 18)

Figure 18: ATO West Paired T-Test

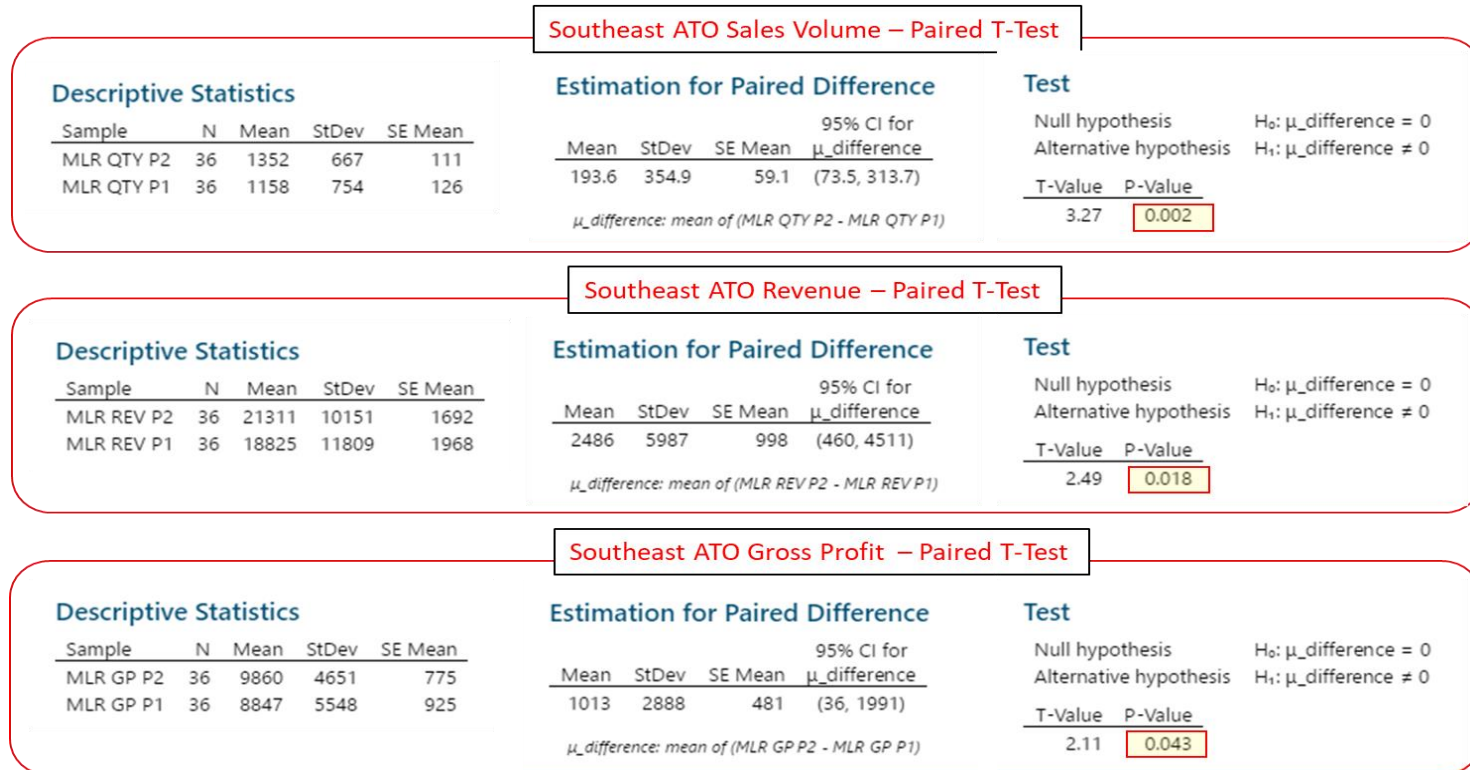


The fifteen ATO Stores in period 1 (P1) vs. period 2 (P2) of the West (W) chapter demonstrate a statistically significant difference between means, illustrating a significant decrease in sales volume, revenue, and gross profit, with no APA BRG intervention.

5.3.2 Paired T-Test – ATO Southeast chapter

The paired t-test tests for difference in the means between period 1 vs. period 2. The null hypothesis states there is no statistically significant difference between the means. If the p-value is <.05, we reject the null hypothesis (see figure 19).

Figure 19: ATO Southeast Paired T-Test



The thirty-six ATO Stores in period 1 (P1) vs. period 2 (P2) of the Southeast chapter demonstrate a statistically significant difference between means illustrating a significant increase in sales volume, revenue, and gross profit, directly after the APA BRG intervention.

5.4 Grounded Theory Analysis

Throughout the A/R life cycle, a series of informal and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. Building on the insights captured during the Lewinian learning process conducted during the A/R cycle, I used the constructs of establishing trust, building capabilities, and career growth as anchor points to craft interview questions. During the interviews, participants were asked questions (see Appendix I) regarding the experience during the process, and the effect these activities had on the company, the external stakeholders, the internal stakeholders, and themselves. In total, I recorded fifteen hours of interviews. Directly after I transcribed the interviews into eighty-three pages of notes. The information captured during the interviews, coupled with my memos identifying similar experiences and concepts captured during those conversations, translated to 539 sentiments. The first interval of questions was for action cycles 1–6. This represented the initial start-up of the marketplace initiative, through completion of the outlet blitz pilot. The second interval of questions was for action cycles 7–9, representing the initial engagement with the ATO through the signing of the CMA. The third interval of questions focused on the participants' experience after the A/R life cycle and quasi-experimental design was complete. The interview questions allowed time for deep reflection on the experience and sustainability of what was learned and applied. The comments captured and transcribed from the interviews were entered into Microsoft Excel for detailed analysis. Following the grounded theory method outlined by Strauss & Corbin (1990), I followed a three-step process of open, axial, and selective coding. I used a critical grounded theory approach to the analysis to help facilitate the identification of context as it relates to extant organizational theories (Belfrage & Hauf, 2018). I then performed a second iteration of the analysis by uploading the Excel file into N-Vivo version 12. Using the node structure within N-Vivo, I re-assessed the participant sentiments through the open coding process to ensure thoroughness of key themes that pertain to the research questions. Three themes began to emerge: the development of social capital between internal and external stakeholders; the formation of

confidence, or self-efficacy within the participants; and the innovative practices which led to organizational performance outcomes.

For social capital, as described in chapter 3, Naphiet and Ghosal's (1998) following three dimensions emerged from the the axial coding process:

- Structural dimension
- Cognitive dimension
- Relational dimension

For self-efficacy, Bandura's (1978) informational cues emerged from the axial coding process:

- Performance success
- Social persuasion
- Vicarious experience

For innovation, the following common themes emerged:

- Data-driven innovation
- Marketplace innovation
- Community of Practice

Results from the qualitative analysis were quantified. Throughout the intervals, the frequency of comments which fall under the codes either increased or decreased, depending on the participant's specific experience.

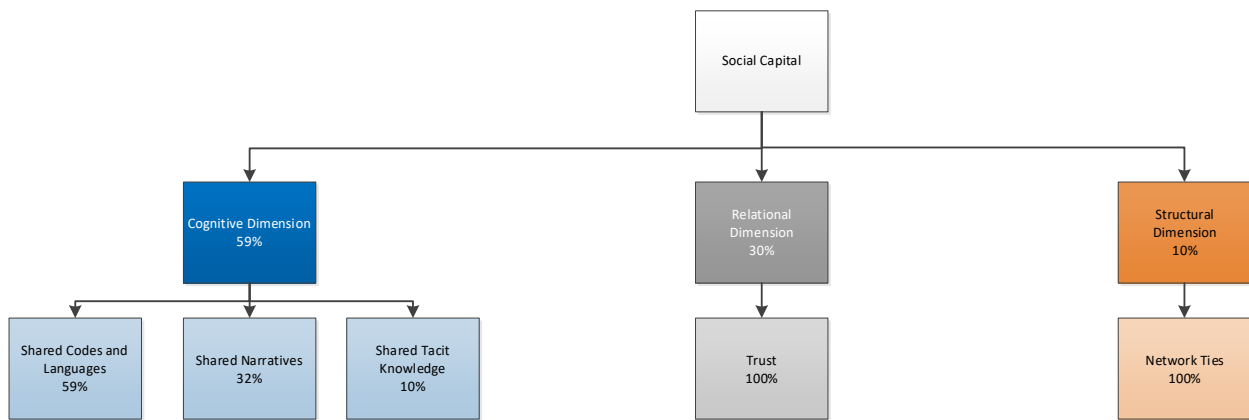
The remainder of this section introduces the results of each interval.

5.4.1 Interval one: A/R cycles 1–6

During interval #1, the BRG team members were embarking on a new and innovative experience. The identification of the business problem (i.e., how to demonstrate business impact as a BRG), the creation of a salient business case and approach, and the execution of the “outlet blitz” in the trade, were experiences rich with context. They were also experiences which afforded members the

opportunity to test, reflect, and learn in a safe environment. As previously mentioned, two main constructs and concepts related to two main theories emerged, social capital (Naphiet & Ghosal, 1998) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1978). For social capital, fifty-nine percent of the comments were coded to the cognitive dimension, thirty percent of the comments were coded to the relational dimension, and ten percent of the comments were coded to structural dimension (see figure 20). Table 2 illustrates selected comments that were coded, representing the social capital dimensions.

Figure 20: Interval One – Social Capital Drill-Down Tree



During the early stages of the A/R, the cognitive dimension of social capital was more pronounced, as the BRG members were establishing common ground with the business leaders and sales function. By aligning on a shared ‘code & language’ (i.e., to help sell and drive business growth) using data and insights, the initial creation of social capital began to emerge. Externally, BRG team members began to establish relationships with potential customers by sharing ‘narratives’ they can relate to, based on similar cultural backgrounds. Establishing common ground was the first step in building a relationship that could lead to earning trust.

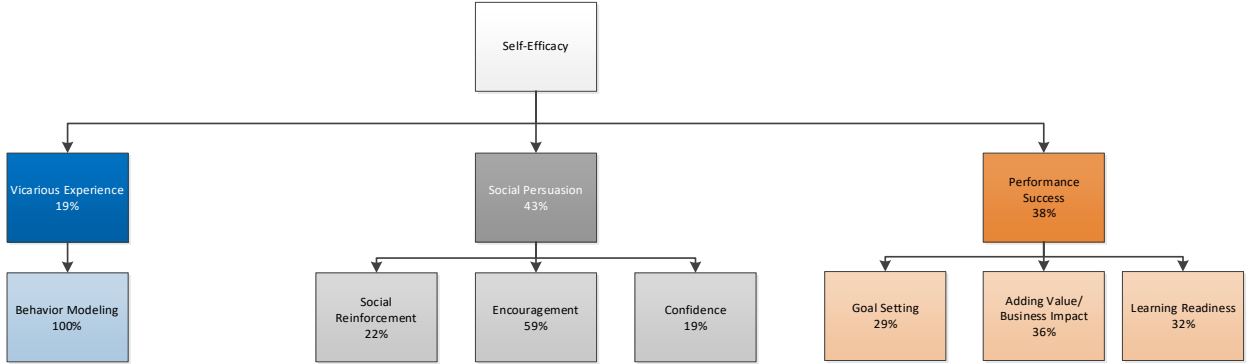
Table 2: GT Analysis: Interval One – Social Capital

Grounded Theory Analysis			
CODE TYPE			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
Social Capital	Cognitive Dimension	Shared codes and Language	When we showcased the opportunity and shared the incremental value, leaders were surprised, because this was done by a BRG, because this is generally the type of work done by a Business Unit team. This generated and built goodwill between the BRG and the sales and marketing teams.
		Shared Explicit or Tacit Knowledge	There was 10-15MM outlets in the US. What we identified there were ~1MM outlets owned by Asian business owners. The capability and tools helped us not only to look at the millions of rows of data, but we were able to visualize in a concise manner. By this I mean we could look at the zip code, we could look at the US map, understand the location, the maximum concentration of the location, we pinpointed the larger chains of business. We didn't build a case out of a vacuum. We used a data driven decision not only on the opportunity, but how to focus and where to prioritize. It gave a true view of what the landscape looked like.
		Shared Narratives	The idea was originally inspired by my parents, and knowing how much attention they pay to it, I thought of them as like the potential customers. In general, my parents own businesses, and just living in the US, and Korean being their first language, anything that comes to the house (direct mail, advertisements) they don't pay attention unless it was in Korean. I noticed when we went to customers, they were not there, and we wanted to leave something behind. And if it was in English, I know it would go to the trash. It didn't take long; it took an hour or two to translate. We got call backs based on the translated materials. The feedback was great.
	Relational Dimension	Trust	What you did was unique, no other BRGs was that cogent, planful, and thoughtful in linking the community-based opportunity with the objective of the BRG, and I think the leaders came running.
		Trust	I felt that we were building trust. For example, Steve was pushing for certain products, focusing on making a sale. But I was there for the customer, to legitimately help the customer, but to also help the company. I think that was my unique position. I think she trusted me, and it showed, as she called me for different reasons thereafter. So, there is some trust there.

Grounded Theory Analysis			
CODE TYPE			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
	Structural Dimension	Network Ties	It was a formula that was terrific. It was easy for me to get senior leaders to the table, because you were solving an issue they can relate to, but you were also demonstrating the importance of having diversity of thought and mind around business initiatives.
		Network Ties	D&I leader's role in Engaging Executive Leaders- The object was to reach out to business leaders, and connect them with the BRG, to make sure they have full visibility, and they have full buy-in in this, and they can champion it, and see the impact, and see what some driven, passionate people can do to grow your business.

In addition to social capital, self-efficacy, the confidence and motivation to perform (Bandura, 1978), was a clear lesson which came out of the reflection process during the A/R life cycle. For self-efficacy, nineteen percent of the responses were related to vicarious experience, forty-three percent of the responses aligned with social persuasion, and thirty-eight percent aligned with performance success (see figure 21). Table 3 illustrates selected comments that were coded, and which illustrated the self-efficacy category and codes.

Figure 21: Interval One—Self-Efficacy Drill-Down Tree



During the beginning of the A/R cycle, participants were learning different aspects of the business. The team learned through formal and informal means, they learned from each other, from the

sales team, from the customer, and they were able to practice doing things they typically don't do or see in their day jobs. As they went into the trade during the 'outlet blitz,' they began to gain experience and success at supporting the sales team. New customers were onboarded, and senior leaders began to recognize them for their ingenuity and accomplishments.

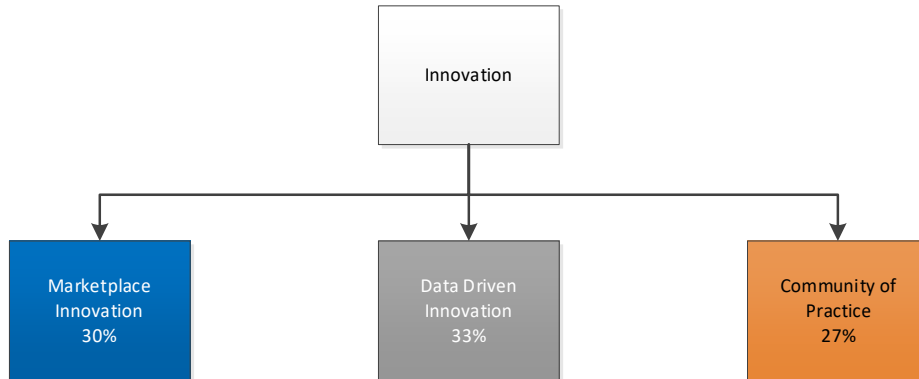
Table 3: GT Analysis: Interval One – Self-efficacy

Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
Self-Efficacy	Vicarious Experience	Modeling	<p>Listening to others, and hearing their selling approach, and taking their selling technique, we heard more and more people that helped to sell in.</p> <p>Those that were confident enough, could start to dabble into and talk the sales cycle, but it was good for them to take a step back and learn how the sales team would maneuver and drive the conversation with the customer, and they progressed through those sales milestones.</p>
	Social Persuasion	Social Reinforcement	<p>Recognition was critical. I think our President was a believer. He wasn't saying it to say it. He believed the effectiveness of the BRGs.</p> <p>I very clearly remember the session, I clearly remember our President giving me an award, I still have the picture. I think the recognition was important for these type of initiatives for the Company.</p>
		Encouragement	My manager very much supported this project. She thought it was a great initiative that benefited the company overall especially the lessons learned.
		Confidence	if BRG members feel the company is giving back, and cares about them, their culture, and their contribution to the business, you're going to get a much more productive associate than you would get otherwise. I think they're confidence that the company cares about them, and their confidence in the company, makes all the difference in the world.
	Performance Success	Goal Setting	It was intimidating as a technical person as an engineer, I've never been in a pure sales or marketing role. Going out to talk to people, and asking them questions, to make a connection point, something I didn't feel comfortable with, it was intimidating. But I've always been a person to feel comfortable being

Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
			uncomfortable. That's why I raised my hand to do something that was uncomfortable to me, because I know how important this was to the company, and this was important to me to set up a schedule, to go out there and see what the outlet experience is on a day-to-day basis, to make a connection to make sure those folks know our company has people just like them, who speak their language.
Self-Efficacy		Business Impact/Adding Value	It felt like we did something monumental for the company. It was not just accomplishment for the BRG but for the company. It was like a light bulb in our President's head, but we did something that added value to the company, shareholder value. We did something that senior leaders asked why we are not doing this with other BRGs, and we truly took what a BRG could and should be doing.
		Skill building	From a training preparation standpoint, it was great to see there was a lot of willingness to get help on the fundamentals from the sales team. I could find a lot of our BRG associates who never had a sales background. It was a great experience for me personally to be part of the MNC sales experience, how to build a discussion, and how to build a relationship to sell in the outlet. That was a truly unique experience that we all got. While we had some people on the sales team, I think the diversity of the team and the ability for anyone to learn something new was very helpful.

Using the marketplace initiative as a test to experiment with new ways the APA BRG can add value to the MNC, a third construct emerged from the interviews. Innovation as a process described the unique approach taken, which highlighted the creative and repeatable framework for assisting the MNC to drive organizational performance growth (see figure 22). Table 4 illustrates selected comments that were coded, and that illustrate the innovation category and codes. The following three categories emerged from the analysis: marketplace innovation (thirty percent), data-driven innovation (thirty-three percent) and CoP (twenty-seven percent).

Figure 22: Interval One—Innovation Drill-Down Tree



The identification of a marketing tool with customer insights, inclusive of US census information, allowed the team to identify clusters across the US, based on ethnicity. These insights helped shape the business case and provided the APA BRG the appropriate list of potential customers.

Table 4: GT Analysis: Interval One – Innovation

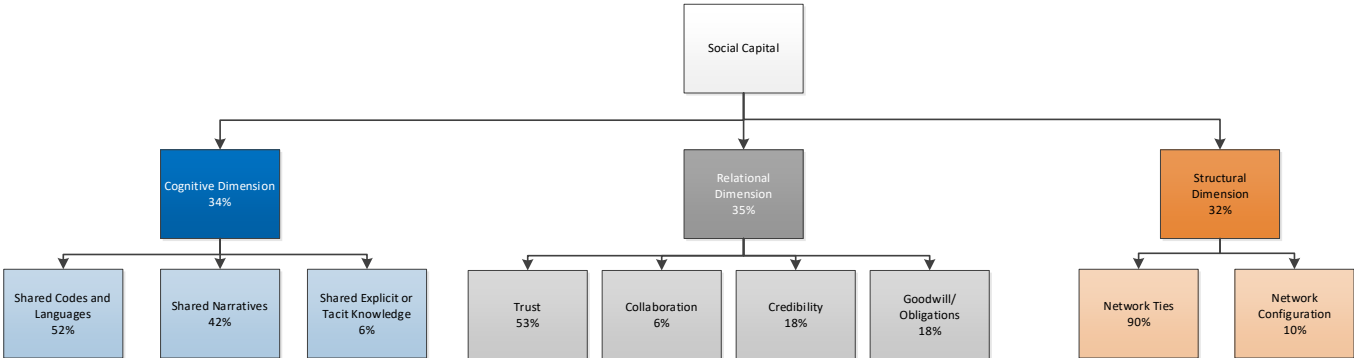
Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
Data Driven Innovation	Customer outlets	Data Analysis	There was 10-15MM outlets in the US. What we identified were ~1MM outlets owned by Asian business owners, owing to the US Census information overlaying our data set. That was the data which was available from Outlet Galaxy.
Community of Practice	BRG as a support system	Linguistic expertise	I believe our President’s takeaway was the company needs at least a support system, someone from the company like a go-to, or a teammate that can swoop in sometimes. It could be someone that speaks the language or a hotline.
Marketplace Innovation	Unique linkage model	Business objectives	We got their executive leader’s buy in, because not only were we supporting the BRG, but we were supporting the businesses they oversaw. It was a unique way the BRG linked with the very robust business objectives, to link with the local community, and the sales

Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
			community, that you can identify an opportunity in the marketplace.

5.4.2 Interval two: A/R cycles 7–9

After experiencing early incremental success with the outlet blitz, the experience building relationships with the ATO, further expanded the reach of social capital. Sales leaders, marketing leaders, and executives within the ATO, became part of the extended network within the BRG. The dimensions of social capital development shifted during this interval. Thirty-four percent of the comments coded to the cognitive dimension, thirty-five percent coded to the relational dimension, and thirty-two percent coded to structural dimension (see figure 23). Table 5 illustrates selected comments that were coded, and that illustrated the social capital dimensions.

Figure 23: Interval Two—Social Capital Drill-Down Tree



Further into the A/R lifecycle the frequency of the relational and structural dimension began to expand. In particular, the formation of trust began to emerge as the BRG demonstrated competencies and the ability to deliver. In addition, the expansion of network ties across the different social structures started to unfold, elongating the breadth and depth of internal and external connections. The

introduction of the ATO introduced a new set of possibilities in how the BRG can add value at a scale level.

Table 5: GT Analysis: Interval Two – Social Capital

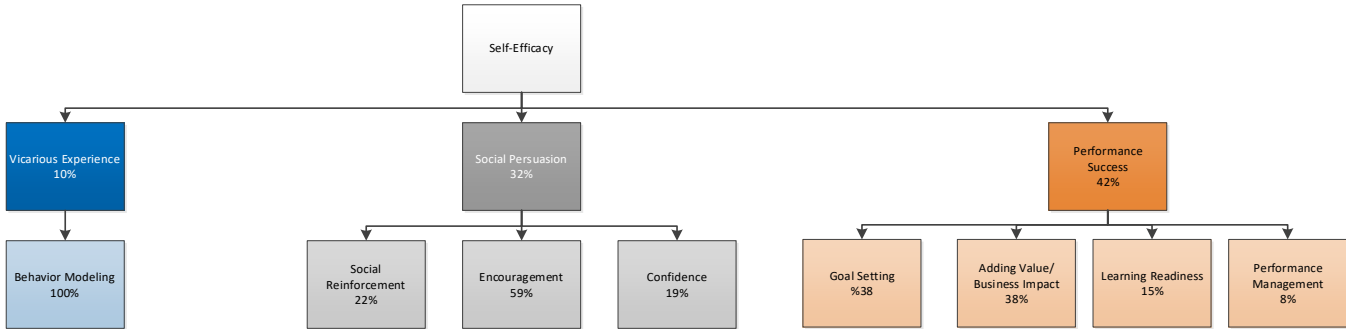
Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
Social Capital	Cognitive Dimension	Shared codes and Languages	I think that your engagement with our President early on, helped him understand the collective. Our company deals with big customers very well, with small customers not so much. And so, when you look at it from a general perception, you think there is a Korean grocery store, in a community, that does nickel and dime businesses, and we don't deal with it. The challenge with our system is showing the scope and potential within the ATO. this is how many of us we are, and this is our collective buying power, and this how we will help you target urban diverse communities. This was the beauty in educating the system that we are not dealing with one off moms and pops. And when we started talking to our President, this isn't a store that sells 10 cases a month, but 20k stores selling ½ million cases a month. Showing the collective power. When you talked about the ATO Southeast chapter, there is roughly 35 stores in their member base, and this is who we serve and how we serve, and that was part of the greater value of helping the greater system.
		Shared Explicit or Tacit Knowledge	Our organization needed to start to recognize the ATO for what it is, and its potential. And for our company to invite the ATO leadership to share their experiences with the MNC (both good and bad), I thought that was the kickoff point, realizing we may not have gotten off to the best of starts with different ATO chapters across the country, but this was a start to better business relationships.
		Shared Narratives	To me, as a continent, not every Asian looks the same, but there are some things that hold us together from a culture perspective (coming through adversity), things that you would see in any Asian culture – to us it was

Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
			important to share our own personal stories, at a very informal low keyway. The night at the ballpark was a nice gesture and well received on both sides.
	Relational Dimension	Trust	To build a relationship, you must build trust. That night at the ballpark we got to know each other, we could build trust, and it could help the relationship going forward.
		Credibility	Sales Manager - We brought as many ATO Southeast chapter members that can get off work (they're usually at their stores 6-6), to come over to our distribution center – to do a quick tour throughout the facility, so they can see the variety of products we carry. We welcomed them with open arms, let them meet our operations team, sales folks, mingle, get to know each other. We put together a nice presentation on what we can do for them, and they let their guard down. We shared we are here for them, and that we would treat them like any other chain. And we will help them get them off the ground to help them make money for their stores.
		Collaboration	I don't think they would skip any opportunity to gain our support and help, I think they will work collaboratively with us to get things done.
		Goodwill Obligation	What you did was a great benefit for the company. There was trust there, and we walked the path, I understood and believe what you were doing, and no reasoning to hesitate whatsoever.
	Structural Dimension	Network Ties	Alex Yoo (from the Deep South ATO chapter) was a key part because he knew everyone, and he was able to direct and guide us. He was the point of contact for all the different ATO chapters. With the Southeast chapter, he built the connection for us, he connected them to us. He was a very important player. To have someone to know each other from all sides, we were able to sign on with the Southeast.
		Network Configuration	The sales team realized they can't have just one person managing the ATO. Each of their members have a purpose, and instead of looking at the ATO as one customer, we need to have more coverage. And hearing that we need to make sure we have representatives and

Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
			coverage across all the US, for all the chapters, was a key learning on optimizing our structure.
		Network Ties	I would also say not only was it a model around how BRGs can operate by linking the business to the culture dynamics of the BRG, but you took it a step a further, by going outside and by bringing those leaders into the town halls, so they can actually here from these business leaders who are running the ATOs and who are running the cooperatives, and tell us face to face, if you recall, our leadership, what was working, what wasn't working in engaging us in the marketplace.

During Interval #2 for self-efficacy, ten percent of the comments were coded under vicarious experiences, thirty-two percent were coded under Social Persuasion, and forty-two percent were coded under performance success (see figure 24). Table 6 illustrates selected comments that were coded, and that illustrated the self-efficacy category and codes.

Figure 24: Interval Two—Self-Efficacy Drill-Down Tree



During this second interval of the A/R cycle, the BRG team members began to experience more success with the actions they took to help build relationships both inside and of outside of the company. Creating a relationship with the ATO leaders, and having them visit the MNC HQs, and integrating their visit with the May Asian Heritage Month event, created a lot of good will and a significant, practical

learning experience. While role modeling was still taking place, the tangible success the BRG members were gaining, from a planning and execution standpoint, helped them earn more recognition and social reinforcement to continue doing what they were doing.

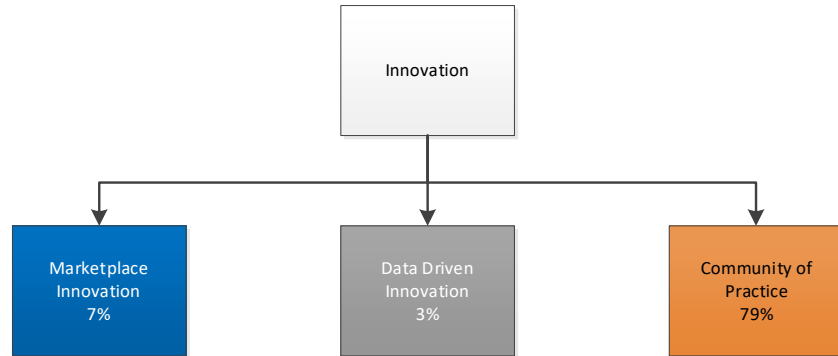
Table 6: GT Analysis: Interval Two – Self-efficacy

Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open Codes	Comments
Self-Efficacy	Vicarious Experience	Modeling	I think symbolically, it was not only important. The key to the event is that it wasn't episodic, it wasn't a one and done event, it was a planned work, and you worked the plan. And that was why it was so meaningful to the leadership and to ABRG and to other BRGs. If you recall we had other BRGs, that came to the events because they learned of the efficacy of the strategy, and so your footprint was a lot broader than the BRG, it was other BRGs, it was how senior leaders were looking at the other BRGs, can effect change in the organization. I guarantee you some of the senior leaders that are no longer there are using this exact model. I bet you our former President of the North America division is using this at in his new role right now, so it was very impactful and energizing. I think people really felt good, as they should.
		Performance Success	Goal Setting
			Performance Management
		Skill building (ATO Leader)	I integrated my ATO members in the sales and promotions being offered by the MNC. Had I not, people would be confused about the products. I also started a chat group to explain the details, for all the members, I use this forum to further explain or reinforce what the new programs are. (Southeast ATO President)

During interval two for innovation, seventy-nine percent of the comments were coded under CoP, seven percent were coded under marketplace innovation, and three percent were coded under

data-driven innovation (see figure 25). Table 7 illustrates selected comments that were coded, and that illustrated the self-efficacy category and codes.

Figure 25: Interval Two—Innovation Drill-Down Tree



During this second interval of the A/R cycle, several additional innovations were enacted to drive business growth. A stronger appreciation for the ability to literally communicate in the same language with a large potential customer, was recognized as a unique strength by the executive leadership. Communications had been a challenge, and the BRG could lend themselves as a community of practice, demonstrating how they can be the conduit and value-add to the MNC. In addition, by leveraging the BRG staple cultural events, such as May Asian Heritage Month, to both honor the potential customers’ experiences migrating to the US, and listening to their business needs, and how we can satisfy them, allowed the team to innovate and align with marketplace opportunities.

Table 7: GT Analysis: Interval Two – Innovation

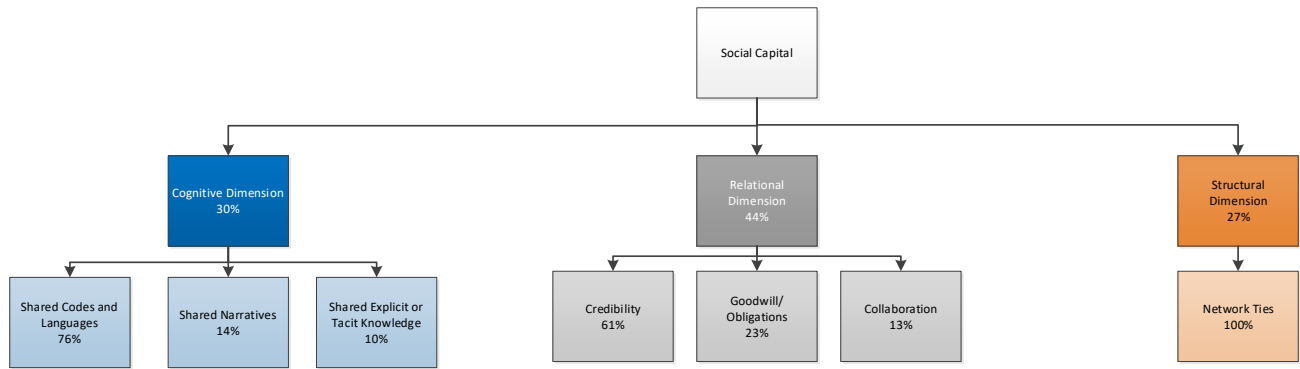
Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open Codes	Comments
Community of Practice	BRG as a Mediator	Linguistic Expertise	One of things that always troubled me about our systems was, two things – the cultural awareness and then language, and how we can get through these two thresholds, and get to the places where you can drive business. It wasn’t just Korean, but it was for Indian, South Asians, or Chinese, we had the same draw back - many of the owners

Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open Codes	Comments
			were first generation, and the language and cultural dynamics were difficult for our system. and it was difficult to communicate. One of things I always wished for, is for a way for us to bridge that barrier. Until we had an official conversation about this, I thought it was an amazing confluence of ideas that it was a solution to something that has been troubling us across the country for years.
Marketplace Innovation	Problem solving	Voice of customer	When we did the May Asian Heritage Month, and we invited the ATO to participate in an open panel, to understand their viewpoint, giving them an opportunity to express their view on having a relationship with the MNC, they were able to identify the gaps and opportunities, at a local level. Our President had another eyebrow moment. Hearing first hand things were disjointed in our local areas, and being able to understand what we can do to help strengthen the relationship.it was like a VOC session.
Data Driven Innovation	Customer outlets	Value-add	When you talked about the ATO Southeast chapter, there is roughly 35 stores in their member base, and this is who we serve and how we serve, and that was part of the greater value of helping the greater system.

5.4.3 Interval three: Post A/R cycle

The goal of the third interval of questions was to learn about the efficacy of the participant’s experience. For social capital, the comments coded for cognitive dimension was thirty percent, the structural dimension was twenty-seven percent, and the relational dimension was forty-four percent (see figure 26). Table 8 illustrates selected comments that were coded, and that illustrated the social capital dimensions.

Figure 26: Interval Three—Social Capital Drill-Down Tree



After demonstrating the success gained through the marketplace initiative, the reputation of a true business resource preceded the APA BRG. A significant amount of credibility was established, highlighting the analytical, strategic, and innovative approach this diverse group of volunteers can deliver. Clearly the oscillation from the cognitive dimension to the relational dimension of social capital was significant, as the BRG no longer had to prove their value through sharing a common purpose or common code. Trust was built, through competencies that had been consistently demonstrated.

Table 8: GT Analysis: Interval Three – Social Capital

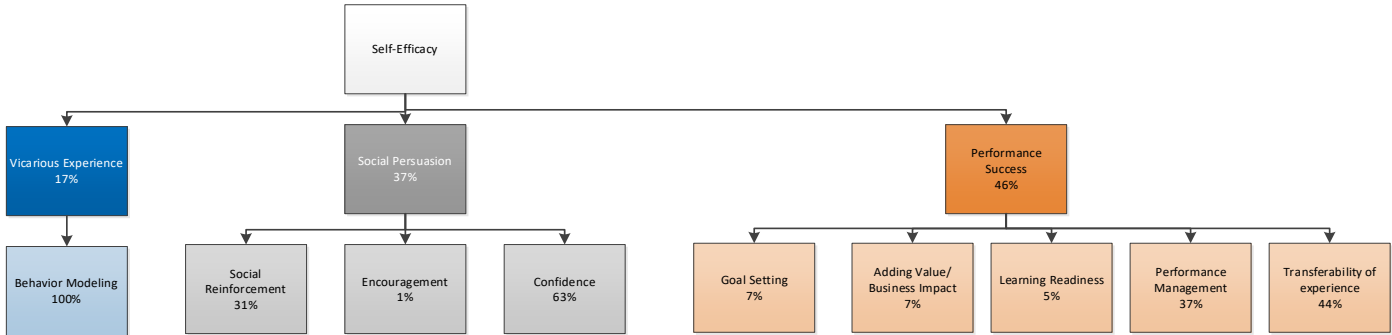
Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
Social Capital	Cognitive Dimension	Shared Codes and Languages	The concept of aligning with business objectives, I believe beforehand it was a component of the D&I strategy that turned into a component of the business strategy of the business unit leaders – big difference. This is critical because if you don't have it, then it is episodic. Which is what you don't want. You want diversity as part of running the business. And that is what you did.
		Shared Narratives	Through this experience, I had a stronger appreciation with the culture, and it was important for me to go out and meet the people I represent and find out what their needs are.

Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
		Explicit & Tacit Knowledge	On top of it all, it really was a turning point for the BRGs, and it was something we were all setting out to do, collectively. So, we saw this at different conferences, every BRG would come up with stuff to do in house, stuff that they've been working on for like 20 years. And that's what BRGs started out doing. But this was sort of like the future of how you can get D&I to truly work for you. At its core, it's about being bigger than the sum of its parts and using the power of all these people to really drive innovation and drive growth. And I think that's what we all collectively were part of it.
		Shared Codes and Languages	(Southeast Sales Leader) Every year when I do a contract with the ATO, I set aside \$10-15 thousand dollars to apply to their annual fundraiser. They provide local students with scholarships to attend college. Our company believes in and provides 'philanthropic, monetary incentive' where the ATO is giving back to the community. We are a big sponsor of that annual event.
	Relational Dimension	Credibility	People were able to connect with me from this initiative, I was able to connect with them for my day job. I was well recognized, and associated with someone that can drive success, which was quite remarkable. I would say a lot was word of mouth, that whenever ATO was trying to get established my name was brought up that was successful, and it was a successful startup. Internal recognition was beneficial.
		Collaborate	(Sam – Sales Manager) I was getting phone calls from other business units across the country, trying to found out how we can support this ATO chapter into a key account. I fielded about ½ dozen calls on where I would walk through this process on how I could corral them, because traditionally the ATO stores will buy off the Full Line Operators, as they are going to look for the better deal. But we accomplished getting them to buy 100% from us. I would get phone calls on what we did to get them to stop buying from the FLO's. I explained how we built the relationship starting at HQ, with the May Asian Heritage event, and then bringing them to the distribution center in the southeast region. I was one of the first to get this chapter in the Southeast, on a key account, CMA, locked in with better pricing, and with that we got the preferred space inside those stores.

Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
	Structural Dimension	Goodwill/Obligation	(ATO Leader) Sam didn't know that our ATO is an international organization. Because of this event (May Asian Heritage Month), this helped them learn more about our ATO. After formal meetings, we took Sam to a karaoke place, and we had a lot of fun. When he makes policy changes with their sales promotions, I can do my best to help them out. It's like a true friendship, we help each other all the time.
		Network Ties	During Diwali, the BRG are now inviting potential customers, to be a part of it. There is some continuity there, and they want to ensure that people who have power to make things happen, are there. This is a way of showing potential Asian customers the relationship that can be built. We want to make sure they meet with business leaders in the company to build that connection.

For self-efficacy, during interval three, forty-six percent of the comments were coded under performance success. Thirty-seven percent were coded as social persuasion, and seventeen percent were coded for vicarious experience (see figure 27). The following table illustrates selected comments that were coded, and that illustrated the self-efficacy category and codes.

Figure 27: Interval Three—Self-Efficacy Drill-Down Tree



Demonstrating success in establishing goals that are beyond their day job, linking them to the business objectives, and then accomplishing them, helped solidify the individual performance growth narrative. Over the past three intervals, there has been an evolution of self-efficacy, with a continued

growth in the performance success attribute. While confidence continues to increase, and role modeling takes hold with other BRGS, the APA BRG team members leveraged their experience to ensure they were recognized in the performance management process. In addition, they took their experience and what they learned, and applied in other work-related contexts.

Table 9: GT Analysis: Interval Three –Self-efficacy

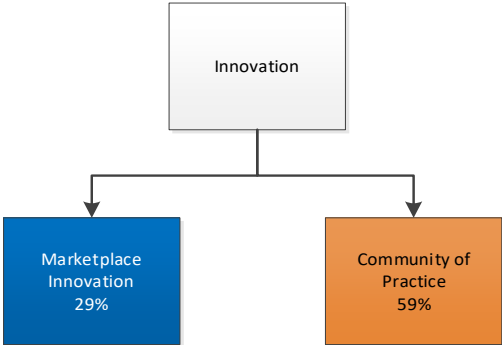
Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
Self-Efficacy	Vicarious Experience	Modeling	Examples of business planning with impact, your group gave viable options and how ideas on how other ERG groups can try to implement and scale similar initiatives.
		Modeling	There has been a positive effect. For example, the AFRICAN AMERICAN BRG, coming out of this, they looked at how they can be part of the business. They’ve taken on the mantra of focusing on Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU), and they help engage by partnering with the college sales teams, and the multicultural marketing teams, by getting engaged with schools and the presidents and the alumni. What we are doing is positioning more of the BRGs to be more proactive and look at ways that they can bring some aspect of their community into the company, from a business standpoint, as opposed to looking at activities as just inwardly focused.
	Social Persuasion	Social Reinforcement	Making a relationship with my direct senior leadership all the way up to my SVP and the President, they knew what we were doing was the right thing, they supported us, putting their name out there, saying “Hey, this is the next generation of leaders, they did a good job with their leadership roles, but they also are jumping out and doing something out of their comfort zone, for the betterment of the company.
		Confidence	I think the visibility and the platform this initiative gave us was quite significant. As a junior associate in the company, at that point, I was able to have the meetings with the group presidents and multiple c-level leaders.
		Confidence	I took a role later as a director, and then Head of Analytics with consulting, now Head of Global Business Strategy and Advanced Analytics. The most important thing I’d like to highlight, having this experience helps you drive your confidence, that you can go above and beyond, gives you the drive that you can achieve and take on a progressive role. BRGs improves your confidence.

Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
	Performance Success	Transferability of Experience	I was part of the Customer agreement Team, as a financial analyst for CMAs. I would help model the contracts, on what we can negotiate and still stay profitable. Through that, I was not only able to help them from a finance perspective, but I could help them from a selling perspective. After working in the trade, I could relate better to what they were experiencing. I was able to work better with sales because I understood the pain points they experienced; I was able to talk about.
		Adding Value/Business Impact	I think that you're BRG was instrumental in helping us have a business case for why we deliberately change the name ERG's to BRGs. We truly wanted to be able to prove that these groups through their innovation and entrepreneurial spirit, all the creative genius that can come from a group like this can really drive an impact and make change happen.
		Skill building	Being active with the BRG, and the leadership board in general, this has impacted my personal career development and my personal journey. Again, we talk about the Bamboo ceiling, this experience, provided me with a safe ground that pulled out of me that leadership space, that I was intimidated, and it gave me a platform to build my strengths.
		Performance Management	<p>"When I joined the BRG, I was a Sr. strategy analyst, then I became a Sr. Manager. I think a lot of the visibility and networking, it was attributed to the BRG. Acting as a VP, gave me leadership skills, and confidence to pursue much more senior roles. I'm very grateful for being a member."</p> <p>Sam (Sales Manager) – "I was able to incorporate this into my performance goals, the first 3-4 years we were achieving 20-40% growth YOY. It helped my end of year review, and Management Incentive Plan (MIP), at the beginning there was no history, but then growing 20-40 % every year, I was able to use this to demonstrate what I can do with a chain, with some of their chain competitors."</p> <p>"The BRG helped me, if it wasn't for the BRG I wouldn't have been promoted or gotten some of the roles I got."</p> <p>"This experience helped my career as the next year, they expanded my functional work. I was hired as a 11, then they promoted me to</p>

Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open	Comments
			12. It was right after I submitted that performance review with the accomplishments gained through the BRG.”

For innovation during interval three, fifty-nine percent of the comments were coded under CoP, and twenty-nine percent were coded under Marketplace Innovation (see figure 28). Table 10 illustrates selected comments that were coded, and that illustrated the innovation category and codes.

Figure 28 : Interval Three—Innovation Drill-Down Tree



After the A/R cycles, the experience and the learning carried forward from an innovation standpoint. The BRG influence as a conduit between the Asian community and the MNC helped to find another common ground—the philanthropic nature of giving back. Discovering those areas where the business aligns with the customer, helped strengthen the relationship beyond a transactional exchange, to more of a trusted partnership. The learning from the marketplace initiative were replicated within other BRGs, demonstrating how diversity can be used as a significant lever to drive innovation to create, develop, and nurture relationships, that are mutually beneficial.

Table 10: GT Analysis: Interval Three – Innovation

Grounded Theory Analysis			
Code Type			
Selective	Axial	Open Codes	Comments
Community of Practice	BRG as a Mediator	Giving Back	The first time I didn't know about the BRG, but I found out how the BRG makes an impact to the community and the company. The scholarship, being able to get a philanthropic donation, helps us give back to the community, and hopefully 10-15 years later it would be great if those recipients recognize all that the ATO and the MNC has done to help them succeed. We would like to demonstrate the positive effect to the company.
Marketplace Innovation	Tangible benefit	Value-Add	If you look outside, you can see other companies that were more engaged from a business standpoint. The reality is the work we proposed was innovative for the company. Imitation is the greatest form of flattery. So, I've used this approach with other BRGs to look for platforms, of how they can look at a segment of the market that they can engage in. So really, if we look at BRGs from just the standpoint of diversity and inclusion and building awareness, and hopefully mentoring and development opportunities, it's also about driving the business. If you look at it from the generalist standpoint, that people will question, "well what value is a BRG to a company?". And the other side, the intangible being able to do not only do "that," plus doing something that is clearly more tangible and that can be demonstrated back to the organization, is a powerful statement that can be tied back to the construct of the BRGs.

5.4.4 Career growth and progression

In addition to the sentiments captured during the interviews, I collected job promotion insights from the participants who were members of the BRG and from our sales partner, to determine if they had been promoted within the two years directly after the A/R cycle. Eighty-seven percent (seven out of eight) of the BRG members were promoted. Of those seven, six BRG members attributed their learnings and experience with the BRG as a factor that supported their promotion. Three of the BRG members eventually left the MNC for senior level roles within other organizations. One who left the organization

had replicated the experiences from the APA BRG into her new organization. Below is a comment from that BRG member, highlighting her ability to transfer her learning to her new organization.

“My new company at the time was trying to set up BRGs. The southern business unit was not diverse when I stepped in. My request for funding events was approved. We had the President of the company kick off Diwali. And then we did a Lunar New Year celebration, and then May Asian Heritage. We created a plan throughout the year, to keep people engaged.” – Sarah, Knowledge & Insights Leader

5.5 Section Summary

The purpose of this section was to present the results from the quasi-experiment and the grounded theory analysis. Building on the insights gained while performing the A/R life cycle, the quantitative and qualitative data helped to answer the original research questions, and at the same time accomplish the objectives outlined in the BRG business case.

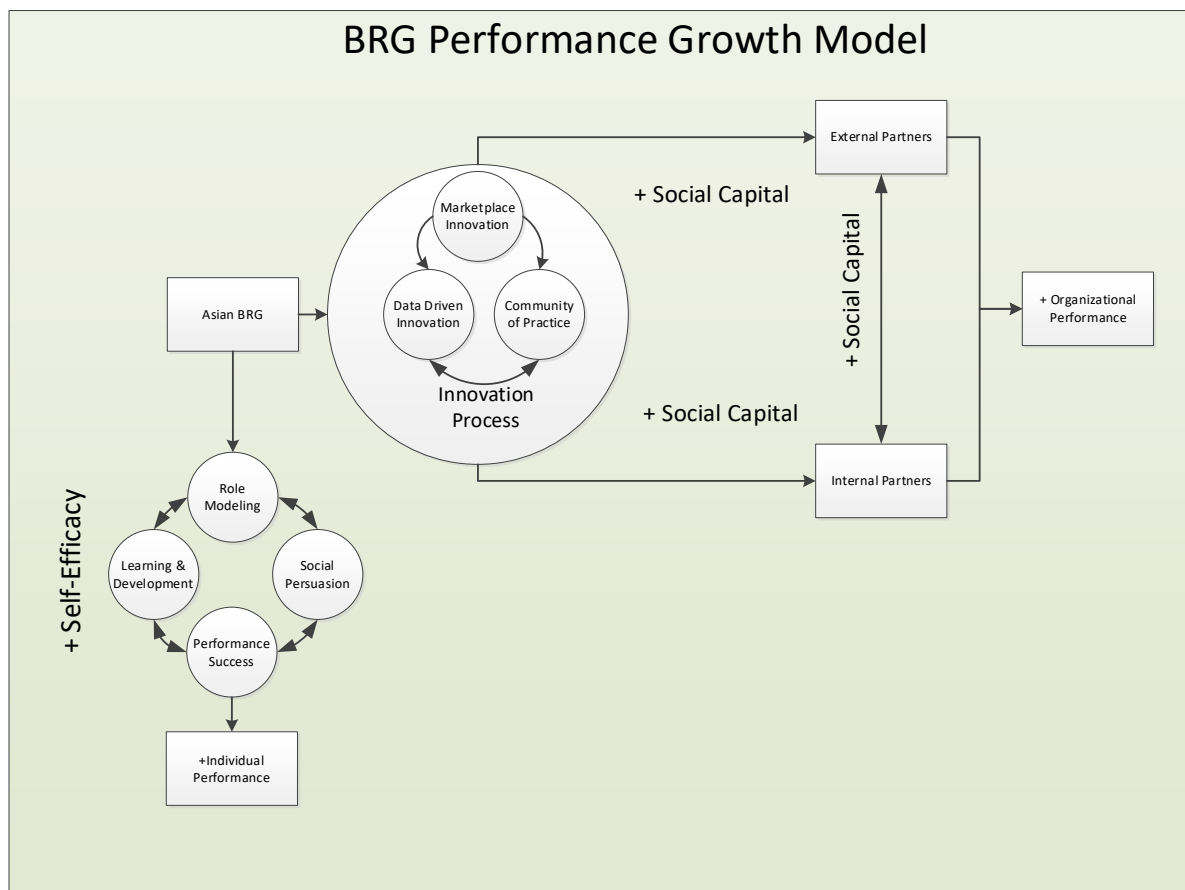
Table 11: Reconciliation of Research Questions & Business Case Objectives

Reconciliation of Research Questions & Business Case Objectives	
Research Questions	Business Case Objectives
1. How can BRGs be used to enable organizational performance and growth, demonstrating business impact?	Increase top-line growth.
2. How can BRGs enable individual team member confidence and professional growth?	This was not an original goal, but a byproduct of the experience.
3. How do BRGs build relationships with potential customers who they can identify with?	Increase outlet development through unconventional and relatively inexpensive methods.
4. How can BRGs connect internal partners with external constituents, to build mutually beneficial relationships, and to improve organizational performance?	Demonstrate how sales leverage BRGs to build customer relations. Build community relations through the BRGs, to nurture and cultivate new customer partnerships.

The data provided a rich source of information that demonstrated the development of social capital between the BRG members, internal stakeholders, and external stakeholders. The data also

demonstrated the formation of self-efficacy within individual team members (see figure 29). The results of the quasi-experiment helped to illustrate the tangible value gained, when a diverse group like the APA BRG intervenes to build a relationship with customers of the same ilk, and how that translates to organizational performance. The control group data in the experiment highlights material value the APA BRG can add as a mediating role in developing social capital. The results from the grounded theory analysis demonstrated how the development of social capital and self-efficacy, can evolve based on prior experiences and accomplishments, highlighting how the different dimensions and attributes of these organizational theories can emerge over time. The results also demonstrate how the CoP focus, can enable a BRG to be innovative, adding value back to the business.

Figure 29: BRG Performance Growth Model



CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Section Overview

In this section, I provide the analysis of my findings, discuss the implications from an academic and industry perspective, outline the contributions this study makes to the literature, and discuss the limitations of my research.

6.2 Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to understand how BRGs can contribute to organizational performance, and at the same time, enhance the individual performance and career development of BRG members. My interests were to solve how BRGs can truly demonstrate business impact, by leveraging the diverse skills and backgrounds of its member base. The previous chapter illustrated the empirical findings that illuminate how the development of social capital, between BRGs, internal stakeholders, and external stakeholders, can play a mediating role in organizational performance. In addition, the findings highlight the cultivation of BRG member self-confidence over time, and how development of self-efficacy enhances individual on-the-job performance. Third, the findings detailed how the BRG performs as a CoP, demonstrating innovative approaches to support business goals.

I employed a mixed method design throughout this study. Most of this research was through a participative action research (A/R) design. The problem-solving life cycle, emblematic of A/R, focused on the BRG's ability to demonstrate business impact. The problem to solve was how the diverse ethnic and functional backgrounds of the BRG team members could be used to contribute to organizational performance, in the form of sales, volume, and profit margin growth. As a change catalyst, I was actively involved with a group of participants, affecting change throughout the A/R life cycle. Using the Lewinian Experiential Learning model, I worked closely with the participants to evaluate and adjust our approach

to solving the business problem. A quasi-experimental design was used, to measure the before and after effect the BRG had on the KPIs, and the organization's key business objectives. Finally, a grounded theory approach was used, chronicling the experience throughout the A/R life cycle, and after the creation of a CMA with an ATO. This iterative data collection approach and extension in time allowed for a longitudinal study to further unfold the emerging concepts and theories of social capital, self-efficacy, and innovation.

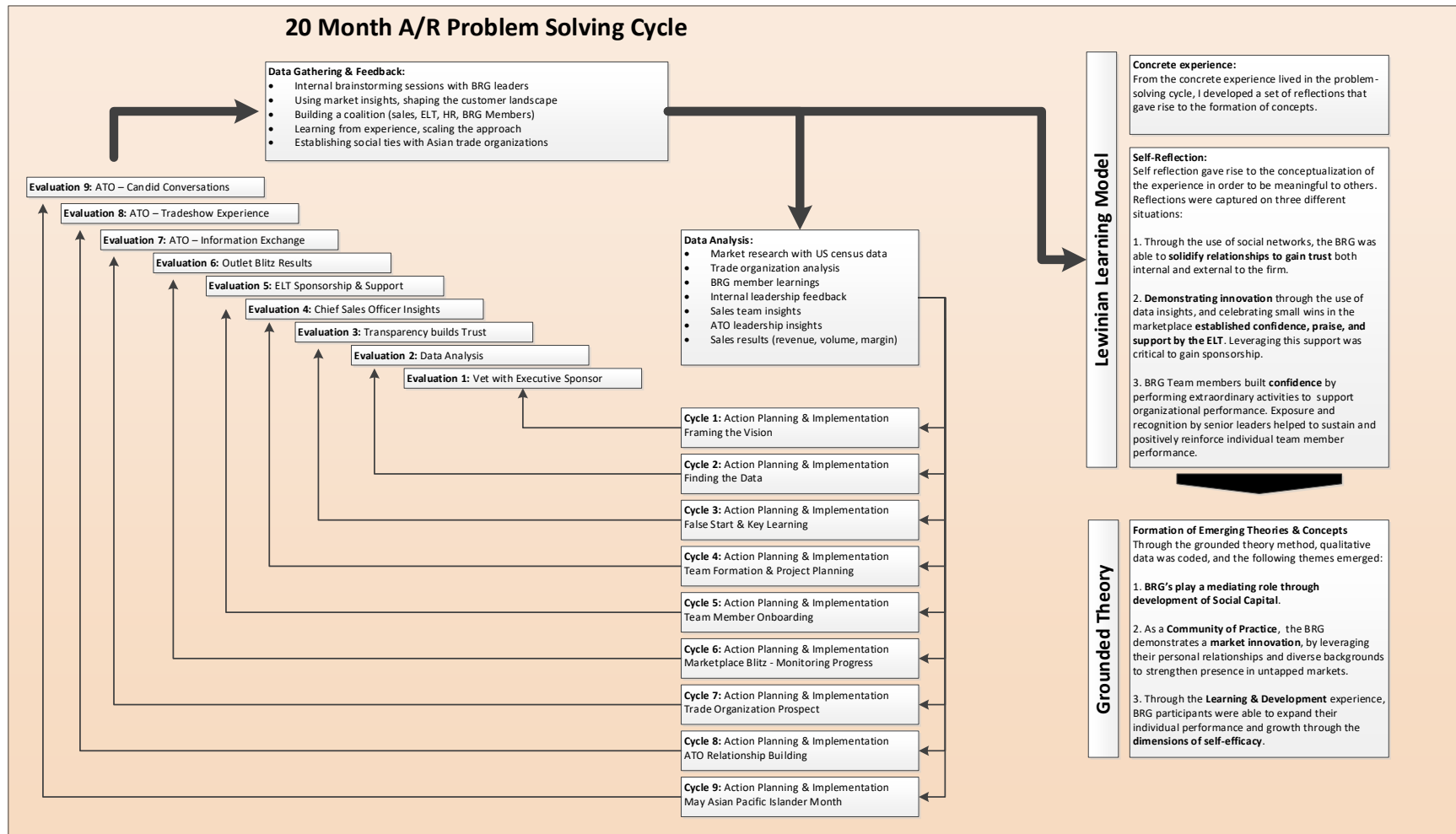
6.3 A/R Problem-Solving Cycle: Concrete Experience & Self-Reflection

During the A/R cycle, there were nine distinct action planning cycles which spanned a twenty-month period (see figure 30). The formation of concrete concepts emerged throughout the A/R cycles.

These concepts which led to practical experiences include:

1. The formation of social capital developed both internally and externally, which enabled organizational performance.
2. As a CoP, the BRG demonstrated market innovation, by leveraging their personal relationships, and diverse backgrounds to strengthen presence in untapped markets.
3. Through the learning & development experience, BRG participants were able to expand their individual performance and growth through the dimensions of self-efficacy.

Figure 30: 20 Month A/R Problem-Solving Cycle



During the initial cycles, the team developed and introduced a business case (see figure 31) which provided a fact-based view of the Asian customer marketplace. What was unique was the business case underscored an unexplored opportunity in a multicultural customer base that had real market potential. This view was accepted and welcomed by senior leaders, sales teams, and the D&I organization, which established credibility and buy-in to pursue the business case on merit. During the mid-cycles of the A/R process, the BRG team developed new capabilities, and began to learn through a wide variety of methods. First, how to analyze and segment data was a new experience for many. While there was a data specialist on the team, there were BRG members learning for the first time how to visualize this data using a software called Tableau. This experience helped them learn something that can be transferred to their day jobs, and that can continue to be a valuable skill set applied throughout their careers. Second, learning how to interact with customers, even when they were not formally selling, helped them build confidence and put them at ease, in awkward situations. Many situations in the trade were filled with customer objections. The training, and the on-the-job experience that followed, helped them become desensitized to objections, and reinforced how to build resilience in the face of adversity. Third, they learned how to leverage their own diverse backgrounds to build trusting relationships. On many occasions, the BRG team members used their language skills, whether in speaking or in writing, to help connect with the potential customers. These natural traits and skills also brought value back to the sales team's toolkit of solutions. Formal training, on-the-job learning, immediate coaching, and peer role modeling were all methods employed to build confidence and success for the BRG members. Formal recognition and praise were shared with the BRG members for their efforts and accomplishments in building new business within the firm. The later cycles of the A/R research allowed the BRG members to continue to hone their skills and build further reaching relationships across stakeholders, inclusive of executive leadership, internal sales function, and with

potential customers. The evaluation and reflection process (Lorenzo, 2010) helped the team identify how to scale their approach and accelerate the business case for marketplace growth. In so doing, the team continued to build confidence in themselves, through real time practice and learning, as well as through positive reinforcement from their management, senior leadership, and the BRG leadership team.

Figure 31: BRG Business Case

Asian BRG Business Alignment – Business Case

<p>Background</p> <p>The purpose of The MNC's Business Resource Groups (BRG) is to "provide our associates in the United States with opportunities to connect with colleagues who share similar interests and backgrounds."</p> <p>The purpose of the Asian BRG is to promote diversity as a business and provide opportunities for Asian American business insights that <u>assist MNC in better connecting with key customer and consumer groups</u>, people development, peer education, knowledge sharing and community engagement.</p>	<p>How Do We Make this a Reality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather industry statistics on Asian-owned & operated outlets • Create a value proposition based on trust and anchored to culture specific values • Tap into Industry Trade Organizations with deep connections to Asian-owned businesses • Partner with Sales and the LEADS program to leverage the internal sales process
<p>Opportunity</p> <p>While there is significant focus on promoting cultural diversity and providing professional development to Asian BRG members, there is an opportunity to strengthen our focus on being a true business resource. BRG engagement with Asian customers to develop business relations is an untapped opportunity to increase outlet growth.</p> <p>How can the Asian BRG help support MNC's top line growth? By tapping into our social networks, industry trade organizations, and individual Asian owned outlets, the BRG can liaise between the MNC's system and potential new customers to strengthen our customer base.</p>	<p>Potential Benefit for MNC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase top-line growth • Increase outlet development through unconventional and relatively inexpensive methods • Demonstrate how Sales leverage BRGs to build customer relations • Build community relations through the BRGs, Multi-Cultural Diversity Council, and PAC to nurture and cultivate new customer partnerships

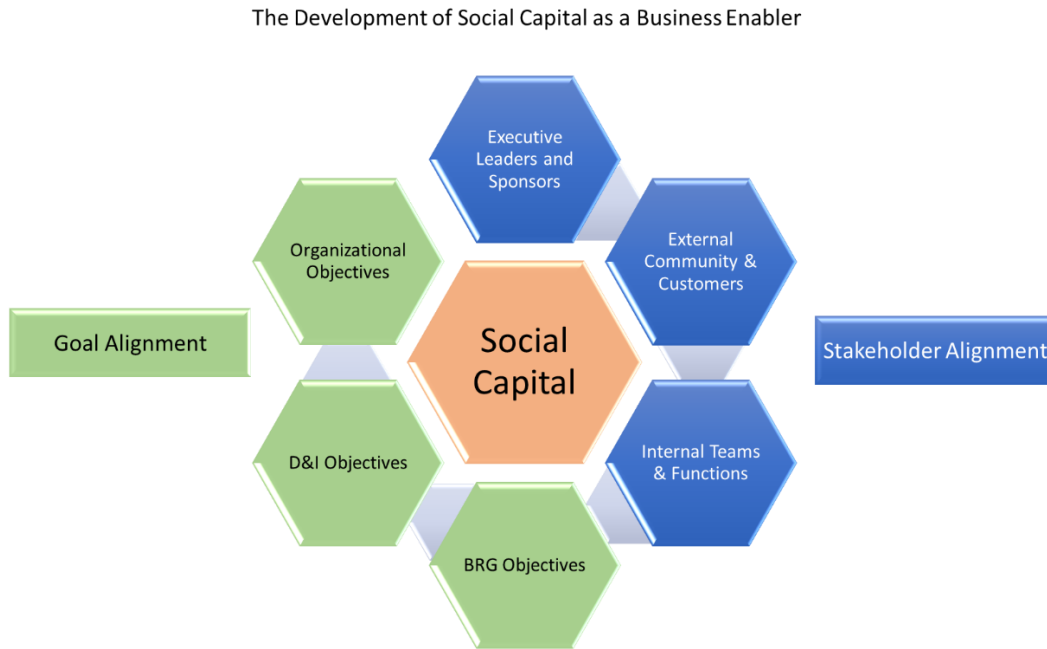
6.4 Contributions to Practice

BRGs play a mediating role in developing social capital (see figure 32). Through the direct experience of the participants, social capital emerged as a predominant theory, underpinning how a BRG forms relationships that are based on trust and common ground (Bourdieu, 1985). The ongoing exchange of information, ideas, opportunities, and financial resources underscored the significance social capital has in promoting a social network that can add tangible value to the organization (Putnam et.al., 1993). The dimensions of social capital (Naphiet & Ghosal, 1998) were clear and evident throughout the duration of the A/R life cycle. The oscillation between the cognitive, relational, and

structural dimension demonstrated a sequence that required a shared narrative and shared codes as a foundation to establishing social capital. Much of the “shared codes” were based on aligning on the objectives of the business. There was a clear link with the business objectives, the D&I objectives, and the BRG objectives. As time went on, expectations were met, competencies were demonstrated, and goodwill was formed, which led to credibility in the BRG, as a true business resource (Ashong-Lampsey, 2016). This credibility further led to building of trust, fortifying the relational and structural dimensions of social capital. Finally, the establishment of a formal business relationship with the ATO, further illustrated the significance social capital created by the BRG can have on organizational performance (Welbourne, et. al., 2015).

Organizations can leverage their BRGs to deliver against business goals, following a similar, innovative pattern as demonstrated in this research. The benefits can lead to incremental performance growth, but more importantly the results can illuminate the need to higher diverse talent that mirror the customer and consumer markets, represented by that diverse talent pool.

Figure 32: The Development of Social Capital as a Business Enabler



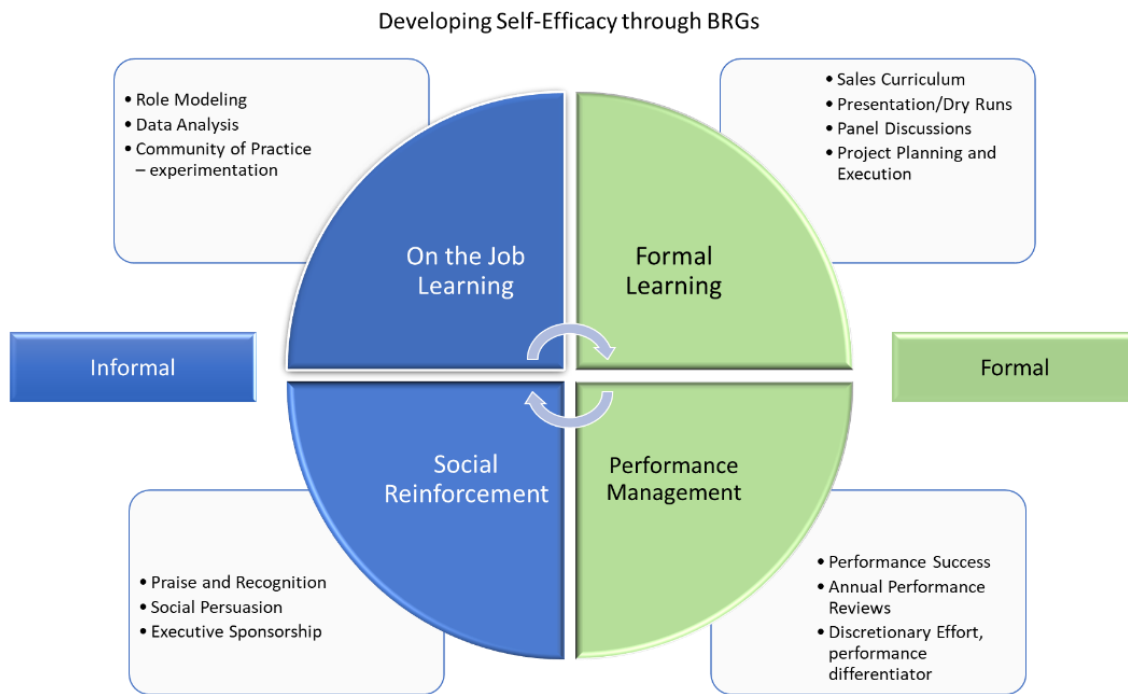
6.4.1 Self-efficacy as an enabler for Individual Performance

Inherent to BRGs is the professional development afforded to members, through leadership development, mentoring, and other forms of informal learning (McGrath & Sparks, 2005). On-the-job learning has led to communities of practice (Welbourne, 2015; Green, 2018), which promote an environment to test, innovate, and develop new knowledge and skills (See figure 33). Following the CoP approach, the BRG was able to leverage innovation to support organizational performance, and at the same time use that approach to build practical, transferable skills. Initially starting with vicarious experiences, the BRG team members were able to witness others' role-model behaviors that prepared them to emulate and then try and perform on their own (Bandura, 1978). Social reinforcement in the form of praise, persuasion, and formal recognition from their direct leadership, peers, and the executive leadership of the company further established confidence in what they set out to achieve. Attaining their goals through clear and measurable performance success, further strengthened their confidence at performing the activities. This confidence led to the transfer of skills and capabilities to their day jobs, which contributed to their individual performance growth. Finally, while a direct cause and effect cannot

be established, through this mixed method design, the strong correlation between the participant’s performance, and their own perception of how the BRG experience was a factor in their promotions and career trajectory, further reinforces the positive outcomes participating in a BRG role can have on individual performance and career growth (Friedman & Craig, 2004).

Organizations can leverage the CoP platform to further develop talent. The experimentation and learnings gained organically from these on-the-job learning experiences, can prepare employees for progressive leadership roles. For those that are motivated to participate in BRGs, they can also set themselves apart from their peer group, by demonstrating discretionary effort in attaining goals above and beyond the requirements of their day job.

Figure 33: Developing Self-Efficacy through BRGs



6.4.2 Replicating the experience

While role modeling was a significant informational cue used to prepare APA BRG team members, it was also used to educate and prepare other BRGs within the MNC (Gist, 1987). Using a similar model, the African American (AA) BRG set out to create relationships using a shared narrative

and language analogous to the APA BRG. Building on their existing relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), they became a conduit with the college sales and marketing teams. This relationship helped to extend or create net-new contracts, demonstrating how the AA BRG can play a mediating role in supporting organizational performance.

The Hispanic BRG followed suit by helping to reduce internal costs associated with translation services. Previously the MNC would source translation services through one vendor, who produced one version of Spanish to cover the entire US market. Given the variety of Spanish dialects spoken nationally, the Hispanic BRG innovatively crowdsourced within their BRG, volunteers to translate multiple dialects (e.g., Cuban, Puerto Rican, Mexican, etc.) to provide a more conducive market segmentation. The result led to a more customer tailored product, and a reduction in operating expense.

6.5 Contributions to Theory and Future Research

This research made several contributions to the existing body of BRG literature. First, this research is the first mixed method study which leverages quantitative data in the form of KPIs. This is the first of its kind to demonstrate the impact BRGs can have on organizational performance. The nature of the quasi-experimental design with a control group, supported a counterfactual inference demonstrating what could have happened if there were no BRG involved in mediating a relationship between internal and external stakeholders (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001:5).

Second, social capital had been identified as an existing theory within the BRG literature (McGrath and Sparks, 2005). Previous literature had posited there would be a positive relationship through the creation of social capital between BRGs and internal and external stakeholders. However, the literature did not include empirical research to test the theory. The result of this study demonstrates the relevant application of social capital in BRGs, underscoring how three dimensions of social capital (shared narratives, shared codes and languages, and relational) play a mediating role in developing relationships both inside and outside of the organization.

Third, I extend the BRG literature by introducing self-efficacy as a key factor which is developed by actively participating and leading in BRGs. The positive exposure and performance success (Bandura, 1978) lends itself to a formative development of confidence which then leads to tangible improvement within individual performers.

Finally, this research addresses the limited empirical studies in the BRG space, by providing both quantitative methods and qualitative methods to better shape constructs and theories, using structurally valid techniques.

6.6 Limitations

Despite the significant number of contributions, there are still limitations to contend with. First, the sample was limited to one BRG within the organization, and the outcomes could be skewed or not easily replicated within other BRGs. To address this limitation, participants were a cross pollination of ethnic backgrounds within the APA BRG. Participants included different Asian nationalities, Hispanic Americans, African Americans, and Caucasians. In addition, the participants in this study were gender balanced. While other BRG's were not formally part of this study, best practices within the APA BRG were shared with other MNC BRGs, as the A/R life cycle was underway. Some of these practices were replicated, to demonstrate business impact. Finally, I triangulated the participants to include individuals from the other stakeholder groups. This included participants from the sales team, executive leadership, and the actual customer. This helped to provide a multi-lens approach to help validate the experience.

Second, given this is a consumer product and goods company, the nature of selling products may prove to be more difficult to replicate across industries. One can argue there are "different strokes for different folks," and that selling or building customer relationships are more conducive in some industries more than others. To address this limitation, the transferability of this innovation can have multiple applications—beyond selling a product or service to customers. There are internal benefits such as cost savings (e.g., through translation services), focus group sessions with a particular attribute

centered BRG to help with product and service design insights, or external societal benefits (e.g., providing STEM training to at-risk, or underrepresented youth). Each of these examples could lead to positive, societal impacts that go beyond the monetary value BRGs can help harvest.

Finally, the qualitative nature of the A/R cycles and the grounded theory approach could lead to observer bias, resulting in subjective interpretations of the data. To reduce potential bias, I performed two stages of the qualitative data review, the first through a manual approach using MS Excel. The second by re-running the analysis using N-Vivo. This helped me further rationalize the categories initially determined during the manual analysis, as well as help me uncover dual meaning within sentiments already coded. This provided a more robust view of the participant experience which emerged throughout the study.

6.7 Conclusion

Through the inherent social nature of BRGs, they have had great success in developing their member base (McGrath & Sparks, 2005), as well as educating non-members through cultural awareness events (Green, 2018). There is opportunity to further examine the cause-and-effect relationship social capital can have in developing relationships within and outside of the organization. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the results can further be generalized across other industries and types of BRGs.

From a D&I viewpoint, this research provides a tangible and clear indicator as to how BRGs, as an extension to D&I, can benefit both the organization and the individuals who volunteer. Organizations can use the BRG platform as a true incubator for leadership development, affording the members the opportunity for stretch assignments, leadership training, and formal mentorship programs. In addition, the CoP aspect of BRGs, can lend itself to an organic innovation lab, as the members have a creative license to explore, experiment, fail, and learn fast. The ability to build confidence and internal

motivation will further develop leadership competencies that are portable, and important for ongoing employee growth.

CAPÍTULO 6: ANÁLISIS

6.1 Resumen de la sección

En esta sección, presento el análisis de mis conclusiones, examino las implicaciones desde una perspectiva académica y de la industria, esbozo las contribuciones de este estudio a la literatura y abordo las limitaciones de mi investigación.

6.2 Introducción

El propósito de este estudio de investigación era comprender cómo los BRG pueden contribuir al rendimiento de la organización y, al mismo tiempo, mejorar el rendimiento individual y el desarrollo profesional de los miembros de los BRG. Mi interés era resolver cómo los BRG pueden demostrar realmente el impacto empresarial, aprovechando las diversas habilidades y antecedentes de su base de miembros. El capítulo anterior ilustró los resultados empíricos que esclarecen cómo el desarrollo del capital social –entre los BRG, las partes interesadas internas y las externas– puede desempeñar un papel mediador en el rendimiento de la organización. Además, los resultados destacan el cultivo de la autoconfianza de los miembros de los BRG a lo largo del tiempo, y cómo el desarrollo de la autoeficacia mejora el rendimiento individual en el trabajo. En tercer lugar, los resultados detallan cómo el BRG actúa como CdP (Comunidad de Práctica), demostrando enfoques innovadores para apoyar los objetivos empresariales.

A lo largo de este estudio empleé un diseño de método mixto. La mayor parte de esta investigación se realizó mediante un diseño de investigación-acción participativa (IAP). El ciclo de vida de resolución de problemas, emblemático de la IAP, se centró en la capacidad del BRG para demostrar un impacto empresarial. El problema por resolver era cómo los diversos orígenes étnicos y funcionales de los miembros del equipo del BRG podían utilizarse para contribuir al rendimiento de la organización, en forma de crecimiento de las ventas, el volumen y el margen de beneficios. Como catalizador del cambio,

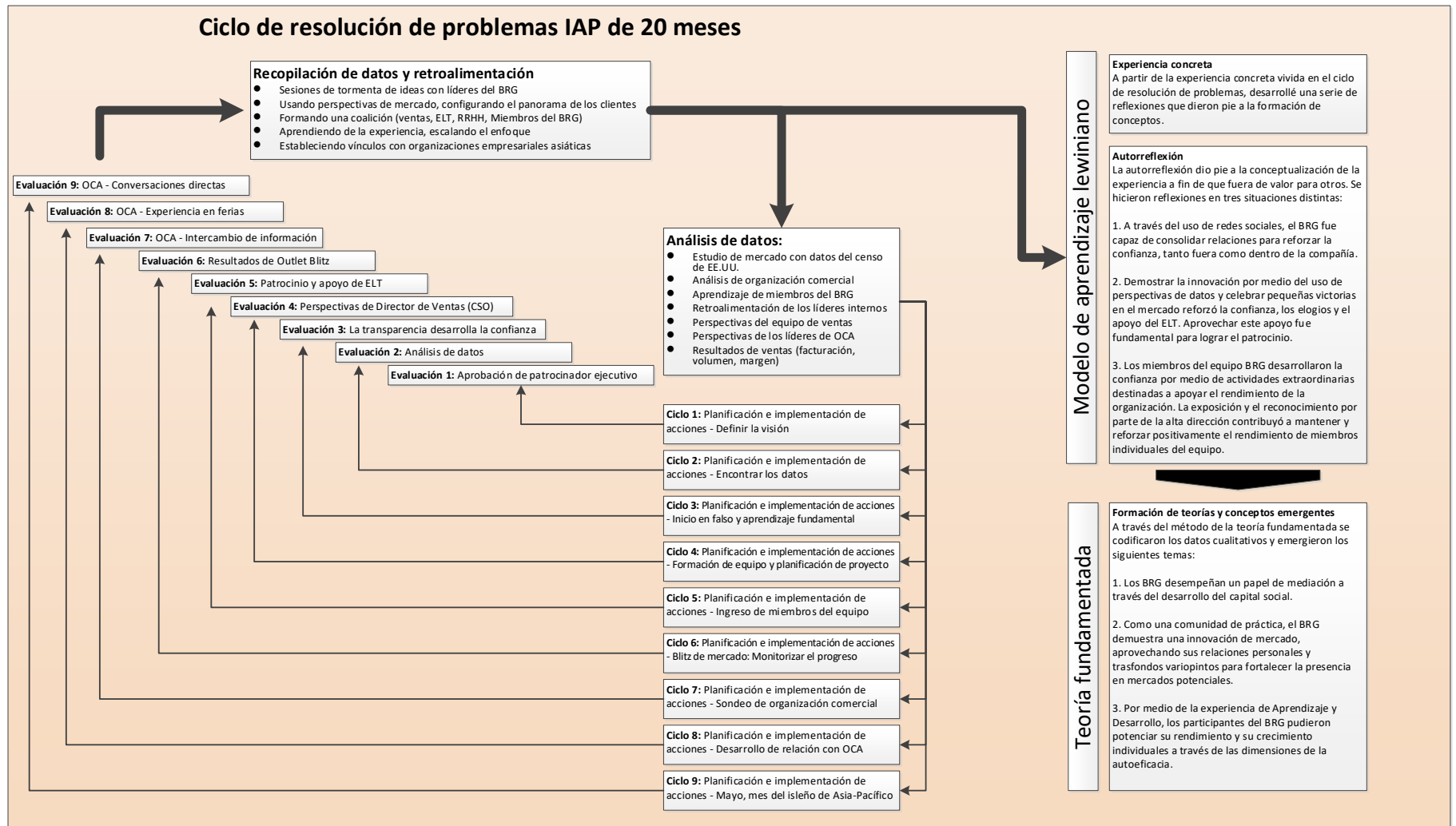
me impliqué activamente con un grupo de participantes, afectando al cambio a lo largo del ciclo de vida de la IAP. Utilizando el modelo de aprendizaje experimental lewiniano, trabajé estrechamente con los participantes para evaluar y ajustar nuestro enfoque al objeto de resolver el problema empresarial. Se utilizó un diseño cuasi-experimental, para medir el efecto antes y después que el BRG tuvo sobre los KPI, y los objetivos clave de negocio de la organización. Por último, se utilizó un enfoque de teoría fundamentada, para relatar la experiencia a lo largo del ciclo de IAP, y después de la creación de un AMC (Acuerdo de Marketing de Cliente) con una OCA (Organización Comercial Asiática). Este enfoque iterativo de recogida de datos y la extensión en el tiempo permitieron realizar un estudio longitudinal para seguir desarrollando los conceptos y teorías emergentes del capital social, la autoeficacia y la innovación.

6.3 Ciclo de resolución de problemas de IAP: experiencia concreta y autorreflexión

Durante el ciclo de IAP, hubo nueve ciclos de planificación de acciones distintos que abarcaron un periodo de veinte meses (véase la tabla 30). La formación de conceptos concretos surgió a lo largo de los ciclos de IAP. Estos conceptos, que dieron lugar a experiencias prácticas, incluyen

4. La formación de capital social desarrollado tanto interna como externamente, lo que contribuyó al rendimiento de la organización.
5. Como CdP, el BRG demostró la innovación en el mercado, aprovechando sus relaciones personales y sus diversos antecedentes para reforzar la presencia en mercados sin explotar.
6. A través de la experiencia de aprendizaje y desarrollo, los participantes del BRG pudieron ampliar su rendimiento y crecimiento individual a través de las dimensiones de la autoeficacia.

Tabla 34: Ciclo de resolución de problemas de IAP durante 20 meses



Durante los ciclos iniciales, el equipo desarrolló y presentó un caso de negocio (véase la tabla 31) que ofrecía una visión empírica del mercado de clientes asiáticos. Lo singular era que el caso de negocio subrayaba una oportunidad inexplorada en una base de clientes multiculturales que tenía un potencial de mercado real. Los líderes de alto nivel, los equipos de ventas y la organización de D+I aceptaron y acogieron esta perspectiva positivamente, por lo que estableció la credibilidad y la aceptación para seguir el caso de negocio de forma razonada. Durante los ciclos intermedios del proceso de IAP, el equipo de BRG desarrolló nuevas capacidades y comenzó a aprender a través de una amplia variedad de métodos. En primer lugar, la forma de analizar y segmentar los datos fue una experiencia nueva para muchos. Aunque había un especialista en datos en el equipo, hubo miembros del BRG que aprendieron por primera vez a visualizar estos datos utilizando un software llamado Tableau. Esta experiencia les ayudó a aprender algo que pueden trasladar a sus trabajos cotidianos, y que puede seguir siendo un valioso conjunto de habilidades aplicadas a lo largo de sus carreras. En segundo lugar, aprender a interactuar con los clientes, incluso cuando no estaban vendiendo formalmente, les ayudó a ganar confianza y a sentirse cómodos, en situaciones incómodas. Muchas situaciones en el oficio estaban llenas de objeciones de los clientes. La formación, y la experiencia en el trabajo que siguió, les ayudó a insensibilizarse ante las objeciones y a reforzar la capacidad de resistencia ante la adversidad. En tercer lugar, aprendieron a aprovechar su propia diversidad de orígenes para establecer relaciones de confianza. En muchas ocasiones, los miembros del equipo del BRG utilizaron sus habilidades lingüísticas, ya fuera al hablar o al escribir, para ayudar a conectar con los clientes potenciales. Estos rasgos y habilidades naturales también aportaron valor al conjunto de soluciones del equipo de ventas. La educación formal, el aprendizaje en el puesto de trabajo, el entrenamiento inmediato y el modelado de roles por parte de los compañeros fueron métodos empleados para fomentar la confianza y el éxito de los miembros del BRG. Se compartió con los miembros del BRG el reconocimiento formal y los elogios

por sus esfuerzos y logros en la creación de nuevos negocios dentro de la empresa. Los ciclos posteriores de IAP permitieron a los miembros del BRG seguir perfeccionando sus habilidades y desarrollar relaciones de mayor alcance entre las partes interesadas, incluyendo el liderazgo ejecutivo (ELT), la función de ventas interna y con los clientes potenciales. El proceso de evaluación y reflexión (Lorenzo, 2010) ayudó al equipo a identificar cómo ampliar su enfoque y acelerar el caso de negocio para el crecimiento del mercado. Al hacerlo, el equipo continuó desarrollando la confianza propia, a través de la práctica y el aprendizaje en tiempo real, así como a través del refuerzo positivo de su gestión, el liderazgo de alto nivel y el equipo de liderazgo de BRG.

Tabla 35: caso de negocio BRG

Caso de negocio: el BRG asiático como recurso empresarial

<p>Trasfondo</p> <p>El propósito de los grupos BRG (grupos de recursos empresariales) de la MNC es "proporcionar a nuestros socios en EE.UU. las oportunidades de conectar con personas que compartan intereses y trasfondos similares".</p> <p>El objetivo del BRG asiático es fomentar la diversidad como empresa y ofrecer oportunidades para tener perspectivas de negocio asiático-americanas que ayuden a la MNC a conectar mejor con sus clientes y grupos de consumidores clave, al desarrollo personal, la educación de pares, al conocimiento compartido y a la implicación comunitaria.¹</p>	<p>¿Cómo hacemos esto realidad?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recopilar estadísticas sobre negocios de gestión o propiedad asiáticas • Crear una proposición de valor basada en la confianza y anclada en valores propios de una cultura • Aprovechar Organizaciones de Comercio de La Industria estrechamente ligadas a negocios de propiedad asiática • Asociación con Ventas y el programa LEADS para sacar partido al proceso de ventas interno
<p>Oportunidad</p> <p>Si bien el foco se pone de manera muy acusada en la promoción de la diversidad cultural y en el desarrollo profesional de los miembros del BRG asiático, también existe la posibilidad de intensificar el foco en ser un verdadero recurso empresarial. La implicación del BRG con clientes asiáticos para desarrollar relaciones empresariales es una oportunidad por explorar para incrementar el crecimiento comercial.</p> <p>¿Cómo puede Contribuir el BRG al crecimiento de primera línea? Al sacar partido de nuestras redes sociales, organizaciones de comercio industrial y comercios asiáticos de propiedad individual, el BRG puede ejercer de enlace entre el sistema de la MNC y nuevos clientes potenciales para potenciar nuestra base de clientes.</p>	<p>Beneficio potencial para la MNC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incrementar el crecimiento de ingresos de primera línea • Incrementar el desarrollo de negocios por medio de métodos poco convencionales y de bajo coste relativo • Demostrar la forma en que Ventas aprovecha los BRG para construir relaciones con clientes • Desarrollar relaciones comunitarias por medio de los BRG, el Consejo de Diversidad Multicultural y Comunicación y RRPP para alimentar y cultivar nuevas relaciones con clientes

6.4 Contribuciones a la práctica

Los BRG desempeñan un papel mediador a través del desarrollo del capital social (véase la tabla 32). A través de la experiencia directa de los participantes, el capital social surgió como una teoría predominante, que apuntala la forma en que un BRG forma relaciones que se basan en la confianza y el terreno común (Bourdieu, 1985). El intercambio continuo de información, ideas, oportunidades y

recursos financieros puso de manifiesto la importancia que tiene el capital social a la hora de promover una red social que pueda añadir un valor tangible a la organización (Putnam et.al. , 1993). Las dimensiones del capital social (Naphiet y Ghosal, 1998) fueron claras y evidentes a lo largo del ciclo de vida de la IAP. La oscilación entre las dimensiones cognitiva, relacional y estructural demostró una secuencia que requería una narrativa y unos códigos compartidos como base para establecer el capital social. Gran parte de los “códigos compartidos” se basaban en la alineación con los objetivos de la empresa. Había un claro vínculo con los objetivos de la empresa, los objetivos de D+I y los objetivos del BRG. Con el paso del tiempo, se cumplieron las expectativas, se demostraron las competencias y se formó la buena voluntad, lo que condujo a la credibilidad del BRG como un verdadero recurso empresarial (Ashong-Lampsey, 2016). Esta credibilidad contribuyó además a generar confianza, fortificando las dimensiones relacionales y estructurales del capital social. Por último, el establecimiento de una relación comercial formal con la OCA ejemplificó aún más la importancia que el capital social creado por el BRG puede tener en el rendimiento de la organización (Welbourne, et. al., 2015).

Las organizaciones pueden aprovechar sus BRG para cumplir con los objetivos empresariales, siguiendo un patrón similar e innovador como el demostrado en esta investigación. Los beneficios pueden conducir a un crecimiento incremental del rendimiento, pero lo más importante es que los resultados pueden revelar la necesidad de un talento más diverso que refleje los mercados de clientes y consumidores, representados por ese grupo de talento diverso.

Tabla 36: el desarrollo del capital social como elemento facilitador de la actividad empresarial

El desarrollo del capital social como elemento facilitador de la actividad empresarial



6.4.1 La autoeficacia como factor que facilita el rendimiento individual

Ya sea a través del desarrollo del liderazgo, la tutoría u otras formas de aprendizaje informal (McGrath y Sparks, 2005), el desarrollo profesional que se ofrece a los miembros es consustancial a los BRG. El aprendizaje en el trabajo ha dado lugar a comunidades de práctica (Welbourne, 2015; Green, 2018), que promueven un entorno para probar, innovar y desarrollar nuevos conocimientos y habilidades (véase la figura 33). Siguiendo el enfoque de la CdP, el BRG fue capaz de aprovechar la innovación para apoyar el rendimiento de la organización, y al mismo tiempo utilizar ese enfoque para desarrollar habilidades prácticas y transferibles. Al principio, a partir de experiencias vicarias, los miembros del equipo del BRG pudieron ser testigos de los comportamientos de otros como modelos de conducta que los prepararon para emularlos y luego intentar obrar por su cuenta (Bandura, 1978). El refuerzo social en forma de elogios, persuasión y reconocimiento formal por parte de su liderazgo directo, sus compañeros y la dirección ejecutiva de la empresa, reforzó aún más la confianza en lo que se proponían lograr. La consecución de sus objetivos a través de un éxito de rendimiento claro y medible consolidó aún más su confianza en la realización de las actividades. Esta confianza llevó a la

transferencia de habilidades y capacidades a sus trabajos cotidianos, lo que contribuyó al crecimiento en su rendimiento individual. Por último, aunque no puede establecerse una causa y un efecto directos, a través de este diseño de método mixto, la fuerte correlación entre el rendimiento de los participantes y su propia percepción de cómo sus experiencias de BRG fueron un factor en sus ascensos y en su trayectoria profesional, refuerza aún más los resultados positivos que la participación en un papel de liderazgo de BRG puede tener en el rendimiento individual y en el crecimiento de la carrera (Friedman y Craig, 2004).

Las organizaciones pueden aprovechar la plataforma de CdP para seguir desarrollando el talento. La experimentación y los aprendizajes que se obtienen orgánicamente de estas experiencias de aprendizaje en el trabajo pueden preparar a los empleados progresivamente para funciones de liderazgo. Aquellos que estén motivados para participar en los BRG también pueden diferenciarse de su grupo de compañeros, demostrando un esfuerzo discrecional en el cumplimiento de los objetivos más allá de los requisitos de su trabajo diario.

Tabla 37: desarrollo de la autoeficacia a través de los BRG



6.4.2 Reproducir la experiencia

Si bien el modelado de roles fue una pista informativa importante utilizada para preparar a los miembros del equipo del BRG APA, también se utilizó para educar y preparar a otros BRG dentro de la MNC (Gist, 1987). Utilizando un modelo similar, el BRG afroamericano (AA) se propuso crear relaciones utilizando una narrativa compartida y un lenguaje análogo al del BRG APA. Aprovechando las relaciones existentes con los Colegios y Universidades Históricamente Negros (HBCU por sus siglas en inglés), se convirtieron en un enlace con los equipos de ventas y marketing de las universidades. Esta relación ayudó a ampliar o crear nuevos contratos netos, demostrando cómo el BRG APA puede desempeñar un papel mediador en el apoyo al rendimiento de la organización.

El BRG hispano hizo lo propio ayudando a reducir los costes internos asociados a los servicios de traducción. Anteriormente, la MNC contrataba los servicios de traducción a través de un proveedor, que producía una sola versión del español para cubrir todo el mercado estadounidense. Dada la variedad de dialectos del español que se hablan en el país, el BRG hispano recurrió de forma innovadora a voluntarios dentro de su BRG para traducir múltiples dialectos (por ejemplo, cubano, puertorriqueño, mexicano, etc.) con el fin de ofrecer una segmentación del mercado más beneficiosa. El resultado fue un producto más adaptado al cliente y una reducción de los gastos operativos.

6.5 Contribuciones a la teoría y a la investigación futura

Esta investigación ha hecho varias contribuciones al conjunto de la literatura existente sobre el BRG. En primer lugar, esta investigación es el primer estudio de método mixto que aprovecha los datos cuantitativos en forma de KPI. Es el primero de este tipo que demuestra el impacto que pueden tener los BRG en el rendimiento de la organización. La naturaleza del diseño cuasi-experimental con un grupo de control, apoyó una inferencia contrafactual que demuestra lo que podría haber sucedido si no hubiera habido un BRG implicado en la mediación de una relación entre las partes interesadas internas y externas (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001:5).

En segundo lugar, el capital social se había identificado como una teoría existente dentro de la literatura de los BRG (McGrath y Sparks, 2005). La literatura anterior había postulado que habría una relación positiva a través de la creación de capital social entre los BRG y las partes interesadas internas y externas. Sin embargo, la literatura no incluía investigaciones empíricas para comprobar la teoría. El resultado de este estudio demuestra la pertinente aplicación del capital social en los BRG, subrayando cómo tres dimensiones del capital social (narrativas compartidas, códigos y lenguajes compartidos, y relacionales) desempeñan un papel mediador en el desarrollo de relaciones tanto dentro como fuera de la organización.

En tercer lugar, amplió la bibliografía sobre los BRG introduciendo la autoeficacia como un factor clave que se desarrolla al participar y dirigir activamente los BRG. La exposición positiva y el éxito en el desempeño (Bandura, 1978) se prestan a un desarrollo formativo de la confianza que luego conduce a una mejora tangible en los actores individuales.

Por último, esta investigación aborda los limitados estudios empíricos en el espacio del BRG, aportando tanto métodos cuantitativos como cualitativos para conformar mejor los constructos y las teorías, utilizando técnicas estructuralmente válidas.

6.6 Limitaciones

A pesar del importante número de contribuciones, hay que tener en cuenta algunas limitaciones. En primer lugar, la muestra se limitó a un BRG dentro de la organización, y los resultados podrían estar sesgados o no ser fácilmente reproducibles en otros BRG. Para abordar esta limitación, los participantes eran una mezcla de orígenes étnicos dentro del BRG APA. Los participantes incluían diferentes nacionalidades asiáticas, hispanoamericanos, afroamericanos y caucásicos. Además, los participantes en este estudio estaban equilibrados en cuanto al género. Aunque otros BRG no formaron parte formalmente de este estudio, las mejores prácticas dentro del BRG APA se compartieron con otros BRG de MNC, mientras se desarrollaba el ciclo de vida de la IAP. Algunas de estas prácticas se

reprodujeron para demostrar el impacto empresarial. Por último, triangulé a los participantes para incluir a personas de otros grupos de interés. Esto incluyó a participantes del equipo de ventas, de la dirección ejecutiva y del cliente real. Esto ayudó a proporcionar un enfoque poliédrico para ayudar a validar la experiencia.

En segundo lugar, dado que se trata de una empresa de productos y bienes de consumo, la naturaleza de la venta de productos puede resultar más difícil de reproducir en otros sectores. Se puede argumentar que “para gustos, colores”, y que la venta o la creación de relaciones con los clientes son más propicias en algunas industrias más que en otras. Para abordar esta limitación, la transferibilidad de esta innovación puede tener múltiples aplicaciones, más allá de la venta de un producto o servicio a los clientes. Existen beneficios internos como el ahorro de costes (por ejemplo, a través de los servicios de traducción), las sesiones de grupos de muestra con un BRG centrado en un atributo particular para ayudar con las ideas de diseño de productos y servicios, o los beneficios sociales externos (por ejemplo, proporcionar formación STEM a los jóvenes en riesgo o infrarrepresentados). Cada uno de estos ejemplos podría tener un impacto social positivo que va más allá del valor monetario que los BRG pueden ayudar a generar.

Por último, la naturaleza cualitativa de los ciclos de IAP y el enfoque de la teoría fundamentada podrían dar lugar a un sesgo del observador, lo que conduciría a interpretaciones subjetivas de los datos. Para reducir el posible sesgo, realicé dos etapas de la revisión de los datos cualitativos, la primera mediante un enfoque manual utilizando MS Excel. La segunda, mediante la repetición del análisis con N-Vivo. Esto me ayudó a racionalizar aún más las categorías determinadas inicialmente durante el análisis manual, así como a descubrir el doble significado de los sentimientos ya codificados. Esto proporcionó una visión más sólida de la experiencia de los participantes que surgió a lo largo del estudio.

6.7 Conclusión

A través de la naturaleza social inherente a los BRG, han tenido un gran éxito en el desarrollo de su base de miembros (McGrath & Sparks, 2005), así como en la educación de los no miembros a través de eventos de sensibilización cultural (Green, 2018). Existe la oportunidad de examinar más a fondo la relación causa-efecto que el capital social puede tener en el desarrollo de relaciones dentro y fuera de la organización. Utilizando métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos, los resultados pueden generalizarse aún más en otras industrias y tipos de BRG.

Desde el punto de vista del D+I, esta investigación proporciona un indicador tangible y claro de cómo los BRG, como una extensión del D+I, pueden beneficiar tanto a la organización como a los individuos que se ofrecen como voluntarios. Las organizaciones pueden utilizar la plataforma de los BRG como una verdadera incubadora para el desarrollo del liderazgo, ofreciendo a los miembros la oportunidad de realizar tareas de extensión, formación en liderazgo y programas formales de tutoría. Además, el aspecto de la CdP de los BRG, puede prestarse a un laboratorio de innovación orgánica, ya que los miembros tienen una licencia creativa para explorar, experimentar, equivocarse y aprender rápidamente. La capacidad de fomentar la confianza y la motivación interna desarrollará aún más las competencias de liderazgo que son transferibles e importantes para el crecimiento continuo de los empleados.

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APPENDIX I: PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Table 12: Participant Background Questions

Participant Background Questions	
Topic	Questions
Background	<p>What is your role in the organization?</p> <p>How many years have you worked for the MNC?</p> <p>Why did you decide to join the BRG?</p> <p>What is your role in the BRG?</p>

A/R Cycle 1–6

1. What was your experience in the marketplace initiative?
2. During our brainstorming sessions, what do you recall was the process in the conceptual design?
3. Our initial fact finding required a lot of data analysis—What was that process like? How did you do it? What insights unfolded as you interpreted the results?
4. How does the Outlet Galaxy platform play into that Multicultural Market?
5. We had data and we turned it into insights. What was the experience like working with other BRG team members through the analysis? How did the visualization exercise help us establish our business case?
6. What did you learn from the initial analysis? Did you think of new ways of segmenting the population?
7. tell me about your experience when we started to form a team, in building out workstreams.
8. Once we socialized the opportunity and got volunteers to participate in the outlet blitz, we started to train them to go into the trade. We took existing courses and then blended them with ethnic specific insights. Tell me about that experience, and the outcome?
9. What was your role in the training rollout?
10. During the marketplace blitz, during our weekly debrief, what are key takeaways you can reflect on?
11. Are there any other things you thought about during the debriefs? What were some of the takeaways you had within the group call, sharing the small wins and challenges?

12. Tell me about the experience going into the trade? What was that like, and what did you learn?
13. What did you learn from that process?
14. What do you recall was the process we used to debrief and learn from each other's experiences?

Marketplace Recognition

1. What was the experience like, sharing this experience with your peers, and to the president of the company?
2. What do you think the takeaway was from our president, on the work and results accomplished in the trade?
3. We had a composite of executive leaders, other BRG leaders, and your direct managers in the room. What effect do you think this had on the BRG members who participated in the marketplace blitz?
4. What did you learn or gain from the experience?

A/R Cycles 7–9

1. During April we attended a tradeshow hosted by the ATO. What do you recall about that experience?
2. Once onsite, what things did you do before, during, and after, that you thought helped further establish the relationship between the BRG and the ATO?

May Asian Heritage Month—Building The Relationship

1. During the May Asian Heritage month event, honoring the ATO, what was your role in the process? How did you work with the BRG members to prepare? What were some triggering events that you recall that established good will?
2. The night before the event, we spent time with the ATO members at a baseball game. How do you think this 'pre-event' helped the relationship?
3. During the May Asian Heritage event, what were some of the practical and symbolic 'wins' that you think helped influence the business relationship?
4. What were some of the key takeaways you experienced, or your witnessed before the panel discussion?

5. Do you think the APA BRG was a contributing factor in helping to strengthen the relationship between ATO and MNC? How so?
6. How did participation in this initiative change your internal relationships? How do you see this affecting your internal relationships with peers, leaders, etc.?

Post A/R Cycles

Professional development

1. How did you think participating in this initiative has helped you in your career?
2. Do you think the company looks at BRGs in a different light? How so?
3. During your tenure in the BRG, did you receive any promotions? If so, do you feel any of your experiences in the BRG contributed to your promotion or personal growth?
4. What experiences did you have in the BRG, directly transfers to your day job?
5. Did you gain access to any career development or leadership training, during or after your BRG experience?

Relationship development

1. How did participation in this initiative change your internal relationships?
2. How do you think the perception of BRGs in the MNC community has changed?

APPENDIX II. QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DATA COLLECTION PLAN

Clarify Data Collection Goals					Develop Operational Definitions and Collection Procedures							
Measure Description					Operational Definitions			Procedures and Sampling Plan				
Overall Measure	Major Segments to Measure (X variables)	Type (Input, Process, Outcome)	Data (Discrete, continuous)	Specification/Categories	What is being measured?	How is it being measured?	Conditions to Record (segmentation factors)	Collecting Recording Method	What (unit description)	How Many	When	
Asian Trade Organization - Year over Year Market Unit Sales Volume	*Asian Trade Organization with direct BRG Relationship *Asian Trade Organization with no direct BRG relationship (control group)	Y1	Outcome	Continuous	Quantity Period 1 vs. Quantity Period 2	Annual Unit Case Sales Volume	Minitab Statistical Software	Outlet number, location, Year 1 Sales Volume, Year 2 Sales Volume	Raw Data Download	Annual Sales Volume per Outlet	Population	Annual
Asian Trade Organization - Year over Year Market Unit Revenue	*Asian Trade Organization with direct BRG Relationship *Asian Trade Organization with no direct BRG relationship (control group)	Y2	Outcome	Continuous	Dead Net Sales Income (NSI) Period 1 vs. Dead Net NSI Period 2	Annual Revenue	Minitab Statistical Software	Outlet number, location, Year 1 Sales Volume, Year 2 Sales Volume	Raw Data Download	Annual Sales Revenue per Outlet	Population	Annual
Asian Trade Organization - Year over Year Market Unit Gross Profit	*Asian Trade Organization with direct BRG Relationship *Asian Trade Organization with no direct BRG relationship (control group)	Y3	Outcome	Continuous	Gross Profit (GP) Period 1 vs. GP Period 2	Annual Gross Profit	Minitab Statistical Software	Outlet number, location, Year 1 Sales Volume, Year 2 Sales Volume	Raw Data Download	Annual Sales Gross Profit per Outlet	Population	Annual

APPENDIX III. BRG ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

APA BRG Leadership Roles & Responsibilities

Diversity & workplace fairness

1. Serve as the link between the Chief Diversity Office and the APA BRG.
2. Advise, counsel, and direct the APA BRG president and the leadership team of the APA BRG on its annual business plan, annual budget, events, initiatives, communication, and ongoing operations.

Executive sponsors

1. Advise and counsel the President and APA BRG leadership team on its annual business plan.
2. Serve as advocate for the APA BRG with senior leadership and associates to advance the vision and mission of the APA BRG.
3. Participate in quarterly or semi-annual business review meetings led by the APA BRG leadership team.

President

1. Lead the strategic growth and development of the APA BRG.
2. Create marketplace initiatives that demonstrate business value.
3. Integrate workplace, community, and marketplace initiatives across other BRGs.
4. Advocate the leadership growth & development of BRG committee members.
5. Advise, counsel and direct the leadership team to achieve the vision and mission of the APA BRG.
6. Oversee management routines with the leadership team to deliver the annual business plan.
7. Consult with key stakeholders internal and external to the company as required and needed, ensuring that they are engaged and informed of initiatives and activities on a regular basis.

Vice president

1. Serve as the operational leader of the APA BRG by facilitating regularly scheduled leadership team meetings and providing guidance to committee chairs.
2. Lead or co-lead strategic initiatives which can lead to business impact.
3. Develop and communicate regularly scheduled APA BRG leadership team meeting agendas.
4. Participate and contribute to at least three key events (e.g., Insights of leaders, community outreach, May Asian Heritage, Diwali, Lunar New Years, etc.)

5. Succeed as the president-designate of the APA BRG after the president completes two-year term.

Senior Advisor

1. Serve as advocate for the APA BRG with senior leadership and associates to advance the APA BRG vision and mission.
2. Participate in quarterly or semi-annual business review meetings led by the APA BRG Leadership Team.
3. Transition to this role after serving as president of the APA BRG.
4. Participate and contribute to at least three key events (e.g., Insights of leaders, community outreach, May Asian Heritage, Diwali, Lunar New Years, etc.)
5. Attend regularly scheduled APA BRG leadership team meetings when possible.

Treasurer

1. Manage the APA BRGs annual budget by working with committee chairs to allocate funds to support initiatives and ongoing operations.
2. Advise the leadership team on spending guidelines and business cases where additional funds are required.
3. Review and approve all financial expenditures before expenses are incurred.
4. Ensure that expenditure guidelines are adhered to, and accounts compiled for budgetary spends.
5. Participate and contribute to at least three key events (e.g., insights of leaders, community outreach, May Asian Heritage, Diwali, Lunar New Years, etc.)
6. Attend regularly scheduled APA BRG leadership team meetings.

Chair of Events & Programs

1. Lead the events & programs committee to develop and deliver APA BRG programs to support the annual business plan.
2. Plan and execute quarterly general membership meetings and Asian & Pacific Islander Heritage Month celebrations in May.
3. Lead the development of a committee level business plan that establishes objectives, goals, strategies, initiatives, and metrics.

4. Participate and contribute to at least three key events (e.g., insights of leaders, community outreach, May Asian Heritage, Diwali, Lunar New Years, etc.)
5. Attend regularly scheduled APA BRG leadership team meetings.

Chair of membership recruitment, & field chapter development

1. Lead the membership committee to drive recruitment, retention, and engagement of new and existing members.
2. Help grow field chapters across MNC in North America.
3. Serve as the liaison between the MNC HQ APA BRG leadership team and field chapters.
4. Lead the development of a committee level business plan that establishes objectives, goals, strategies, initiatives, and metrics.
5. Create and implement the annual membership survey to inform the development of engagement & retention strategies.
6. Serve as the primary ambassador of the APA BRG to recruit new members.
7. Participate and contribute to at least three key events (e.g., Insights of leaders, community outreach, May Asian Heritage, Diwali, Lunar New Years, etc.)
8. Attend regularly scheduled APA BRG leadership team meetings.

Chair of Asian American consumer marketing

1. Serve as the liaison between the APA BRG leadership team and Asian American consumer marketing in North America.
2. Ensure that there are adequate linkages between the annual business plan and work of the APA BRG and Asian American consumer marketing team to drive mutual benefits to each group.
3. Enlist the participation of the APA BRG to support Asian American consumer marketing initiatives, including business opportunities with Asian American consumer and customer segments to test and execute in-market pilots.
4. Participate and contribute to at least three key events (e.g., Insights of leaders, community outreach, May Asian Heritage, Diwali, Lunar New Years, etc.)
5. Attend regularly scheduled APA BRG leadership team meetings as needed.

Chair of Communications

1. Lead the Communications Committee to deliver relevant information to the APA BRG leadership team and members through multiple communication formats and tools, including email, calendars, Chatter and SharePoint.
2. Lead the development of a committee level business plan that establishes objectives, goals, strategies, initiatives and metrics.
3. Partner with the APA BRG strategic IT resource to optimize communication tools needed to inform and engage members.
4. Participate and contribute to at least three key events (e.g., insights of leaders, community outreach, May Asian Heritage, Diwali, Lunar New Years, etc.)
5. Attend regularly scheduled APA BRG leadership team meetings.

Chair of Community Connections

1. Serve as the liaison between the APA BRG leadership team and the company's community connections organizations in North America and Corporate.
2. Identify two to three community outreach events in which the APA BRG can adequately attention and participation toward.
3. Consult with the APA BRG leadership team as needed to make informed decisions on sponsorship requests from nonprofit Asian Pacific American organizations.
4. Enlist the participation of the APA BRG to support local nonprofit organization events and activities and serve as ambassadors to the company.
5. Participate and contribute to at least three key events (e.g., insights of leaders, community outreach, May Asian Heritage, Diwali, Lunar New Years, etc.)
6. Attend regularly scheduled APA BRG leadership team meetings as needed.

Chair of Professional Development

1. Lead the professional development committee to develop and deliver APA BRG programs to support the annual business plan, including guest speakers, seminars offered through local nonprofit organizations, and collaboration with other company BRGs or professional organizations.
2. Lead the development of a committee level business plan that establishes objectives, goals, strategies, initiatives, and metrics.
3. Partner with the events and programs committee to execute meetings and events.

4. Participate and contribute to at least three key events (e.g., insights of leaders, community outreach, May Asian Heritage, Diwali, Lunar New Years, etc.)
5. Attend regularly scheduled APA BRG leadership team meetings.

Secretary

1. Manage the APA BRG calendar through relevant meeting and event invitations to the APA BRG leadership team and members.
2. Record and distribute notes from APA BRG leadership team meetings, notably for action items and follow-ups.
3. Participate and contribute to at least three key events (e.g., insights of leaders, community outreach, May Asian Heritage, Diwali, Lunar New Years, etc.)
4. Attend regularly scheduled APA BRG leadership team meetings.

Strategic Development

1. Identify opportunities to better connect Asian Customers and Consumers to the MNC.
2. Create marketplace initiatives that demonstrate business value.
3. Participate and contribute to at least three key events (e.g., insights of leaders, community outreach, May Asian Heritage, Diwali, Lunar New Years, etc.)
4. Attend regularly scheduled APA BRG leadership team meetings.

