



Successfully Managing The Tenure Of Employees

An analysis towards improving the tenure of consultants at Brunel Nederland by researching and utilizing key success factors

Operational Excellence

Master Thesis

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*Mike van Leusden
Delft, August 2020*

Executive Summary

Within the field of management, (applied) psychology and operations management, managing the tenure, churn or turnover of groups of individuals is becoming increasingly important. Organizations dealing with a low tenure can be expected to lose- or miss out on a substantial amount of revenue each year, its employees will experience an unfair workload distribution and the organization will suffer from an increased customer dissatisfaction rate. Organizations will have to combat the phenomenon of a low tenure as quickly- and effectively as possible.

The practical aim- and outcome of this research was to provide organizations within the staffing-, secondment or recruitment sector with the tools and advice to be able to create an environment and/or introduce certain aspects within their day-to-day activities which will make it less likely/attractive for employees to leave the organization. In order to attain this, key factors for employees (specifically speaking; consultants) were identified and introduced in regards to two main research variables; 'success' and 'learning'. Combining all of these factors, the main research question was formulated as: *To what extent is 'learning' antecedent to 'success' and how can learning be leveraged by Brunel to improve the tenure of its consultants?*

This research used mainly quantitative research methods on two groups of employees, managers and consultants. These research methods were compromised of (amongst others) a large amount of surveys (48 in total with a response of 53,9%) and were analysed using the *Analytical Hierarchy Process* as the main method of data analysis. Following this, it was concluded that the tenure of consultants is largely dependent on a number of key success factors (grouped under five main groups of criteria) and, more importantly, success itself.

In short, it has been proven that 'success' has a positive effect on the tenure of consultants. Following this, the research offers a grounded overview of all the identified key success factors which make it possible for an organization to more accurately and effectively manage- and steer the tenure of its consultants.

However, after analysing the research data in regards to aforementioned key success factors, it must be concluded that 'learning' only has a very marginal positive effect on tenure. Therefore, this research effectively states that having a focus on learning as a consultant does not have a positive effect on success, and therefore the accompanying tenure.

Adding to this, while analysing and comparing the entirety of the key success factors, it was identified that one main criterion (plus its underlying sub criteria/key success factors) was unanimously selected to be significantly more important than the rest in attaining success as a consultant. This main criterion was determined to be the *competencies & mind-set* of an individual. Organizations such as Brunel are therefore wise to keep this criteria in mind while selecting new employees to hire for its organization and in the management of the (personal) development of its employees.

Summarizing, the renewing character of this research is the fact that an area of *operations management* and *performance management* has been being researched by combining three different research variables; tenure, success and learning, whereas previous studies only looked (at most) at the combination of two of the named research variables.

Additionally, organizations and management(teams) which analyse this research will be provided with tools and advice and will therefore be able to make it less likely/attractive for employees to leave the organization, effectively reaching the aim which this research set out to achieve.

In closing, this research gives both academics and organizations an accurate insight into the differences in opinions and experiences of two frequently discussed groups, managers vs. employees.

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Abbreviations

AHP	Analytical Hierarchy Theory
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
BFPT	Big Five Personality Test
BPMSG	Business Performance Management Singapore Group
Brunel	Brunel Nederland B.V.
BU	Business Unit
BL	Business Line
BMS	Brunel Management System
HRPA	Human Resource Predictive Analytics
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MC	Managing Consultant
MCDM	Multiple-criteria decision-making method
RPM	Research Process Model

1. General Introduction

1.1 The Gravity of Tenure

Within the field of management, (applied) psychology and operations management, managing the tenure, churn or turnover of groups of individuals is becoming increasingly important. Tenure is defined as “the aggregate levels of employee departures that occur within groups, work units, or organizations” (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011). Organizations dealing with a low tenure can be expected to lose- or miss out on a substantial amount of revenue each year. This is, amongst others, caused by teams which are constantly changing and the fact that organizations which lose trusted employees will have to recruit and train new employees to take their place. Also, as described by Alamsyah & Salma, employee churn creates a great deal of negative effects for the organization seeing as its effects are unfair workload distribution and the fact that it may also result in an increased customer dissatisfaction rate (Alamsyah & Salma, 2018). Lastly, Schuh states that even the most competent and able worker is of little value to an organization if he or she decides to leave after only a short period of time (Schuh, 1967).

Therefore, organizations will have to combat the phenomenon of a low tenure as quickly- and effectively as possible. This research therefore aimed to contribute to the field of scientific research by providing managers, (management)teams and organizations with tools and advice to create an environment and/or to introduce certain aspects which make it less likely- or attractive for employees to leave.

1.2 Scope: Brunel Nederland B.V.

In this paragraph, the organization which plays a central role in this research, Brunel Nederland B.V. (Brunel), is described in a detailed manner.

As indicated, low tenure is a huge problem for organizations, (management)teams and individual managers. This problem is even more apparent within staffing-, secondment- and recruitment organizations like Brunel, mainly because the industry in which these types of organizations operate is known for high personal- and organizational targets, a dynamic- and project orientated way of working and strict management on output and KPI's instead of personal goals and -development. Combine these aspect with the fact that employees of these organizations are, due to their commercial roles, in constant contact with other organizations which might have similar or more interesting positions available, and the scale and seriousness of the problem becomes imminent.

Therefore, seeing that the scope of this research has been set upon the organization Brunel Nederland B.V., the results of this research will be of the utmost importance for similar staffing-, secondment- and recruitment organizations like Brunel which can benefit from the final takeaways and contributions to the scientific research field.

1.2.1 Brunel Nederland B.V.

Brunel Nederland B.V. is part of the worldwide organization Brunel International N.V., situated in Amsterdam. Brunel International N.V. has more than 10.000 employees worldwide and is divided over more than 100 offices in 44 different countries. The organization is listed on the Euronext Amsterdam N.V. and is included in the Amsterdam Small Cap Index (AScX) (Brunel Nederland, 2020).

As indicated, for this academic research, the scope has been narrowed to Brunel Nederland B.V., which specifically operates within the borders of The Netherlands. Throughout the country, the organization has seven offices; Amsterdam (headquarters), Rotterdam, Utrecht, Eindhoven, Enschede, Zwolle and Groningen.

1.2.2 Products & Services

Brunel International N.V. facilitates professional staffing-, secondment- and recruitment services for both the national- (The Netherlands) and the international market. The organization does this from two perspectives. On the one hand, the organization targets specific business sectors like the worldwide oil&gas industry and the international automotive-, infrastructure-, aerospace-, telecom- and pharmaceutical sectors. On the other hand, the organization targets specific countries on a national level, like; The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and Canada (Brunel Nederland, 2020).

The staffing-, secondment- and recruitment services which Brunel Nederland B.V. provides are clustered into a number of divisions and focus areas. Within these divisions, the organization offers (amongst others) contract staffing, recruitment, payroll activities, permanent staffing, international recruitment & relocation and employee solutions services. The Dutch organization consists of seven different divisions or business units (BU's); 1. Engineering, 2. Finance & Administration, 3. HR & Legal, 4. HSEQ, 5. IT & Telecoms, 6. Sales & Marketing and 7. Technical (Brunel Nederland, 2020). However, because these seven aforementioned divisions or business units are unofficially combined in the day-to-day practice, five main business units have been identified, being; 1. Engineering, 2. Finance, 3. IT, 4. Legal and 5. Marketing & Communication.

1.2.3 Strategy

The organization describes its goal as wanting to be the leader in specific segments of the international labour market. The organization positions (and rates) itself as an authority in the field of national and international recruitment. By using its expertise on (inter)national recruitment, Brunel can identify developments and trends at an early stage which allows it to advise and help its clients by making them profit of the immense network and services of the organization.

In its strategy, the organization focusses on three pillars; *Excellent Services, Quality and Solutions* (meaning, customizing its services to match the client's needs) (Brunel Nederland, 2020).

1.2.4 Brunel in 2020

On estimate, The Netherlands is home to more than 600 staffing-, secondment- and/or recruitment agencies which are different in size and market share but provide similar services as Brunel. Although Brunel is the market leader within this branch (Brunel generated almost 0.8 billion out of the total of 6.2 billion Euros which were generated in the recruitment/staffing market in 2017), the organization faces a lot of external risks (ZiPredactie, 2018) (Brunel Nederland, 2018).

Currently, the most important risks for the organization consist of being largely dependent of the (positive) economic trends, the uncertain battle and increasingly difficult feat of acquiring highly skilled professionals, rising overhead costs (and therefore, declining margins), keeping up the reputation of the organization, keeping up with technological developments and the higher risks (and costs) of increasingly strict compliance within the sector.

1.3 Research Problem

This paragraph further describes the aspects which were mentioned in the earlier covered scope of this research. First, the problem (or "business case") is described. Following this, the problem is specifically defined where the research objective, the relevance of the research, the business process model and the research questions are ultimately noted.

1.3.1 Business Case

Based on the researcher's experiences (a tenure of over 3.5 years at the organization), the low tenure of the commercial backbone of the organization (which generates the lion's share of the revenue) has been the number one problem for Brunel Nederland B.V. regarding these last years.

From the top-management teams that have been battling against this phenomenon for years, all the way towards the individual consultants that see the teams in which they work shrink and change evermore, the consequences of this situation are vast.

1.3.2 Business Case Explained

In the role of consultant within Brunel, employees are responsible for advising organizations and clients on HR solutions and for the realization of the employment of (Brunel's) highly skilled technical specialists on a contractual- and project level. This is, in short, the main profit formula of the organization. Consultants do this by deploying their contracted professionals on specific projects at their clients. These projects usually last between (roughly) six months to multiple years. If Brunel does not employ a certain specialist with the desired expertise for a specific project, the consultant is also responsible for overseeing the process which recruits these specific specialists.

Presently, the average tenure of the consultants at Brunel is 2.38 years (organization-wide). After this average period, most consultants leave the organization because of a variety of reasons. However, the main reasons (based on exit interviews) are a lack of personal development opportunities to grow in terms of position, personal growth and salary. This lack of development is usually accompanied by disappointing (commercial) results regarding their responsibilities as a consultant. Therefore, after a period of time, a lot of consultants either decide to leave voluntarily and start to apply at other organizations, are proactively approached and hired by these other organizations or simply quit their job.

1.3.3 Consequences

Because the tenure of its consultants is low, the organization suffers a number of consequences accordingly. One of the biggest consequences is the fact that the teams in which consultants work are constantly changing. Consultants lose close colleagues with which they work on a daily and very personal basis, almost quarterly at times. Because the teams are constantly changing:

1. Knowledge and business information is hardly (and not efficiently) transferred towards new team members when consultants leave the organization. Therefore, a risk of a lack of continuity for the individual consultants, the teams and the organization is present;
2. Employed specialists are constantly switched between consultants when a consultant leaves Brunel. This can make it hard for specialists to form a personal bond with their appointed consultant and even Brunel as an organization. Because of this, there is a risk of losing the specialist along the way which in turn impacts the consultant, the team and the organization;
3. Clients constantly work with new consultants as their appointed account managers. This can reduce and/or slow the bond which is formed (and needs to be formed) between the consultant and the client. The more this relationship between the client and Brunel suffers, the more it will negatively impact the organization, the consultant itself and his/her team;
4. Teams are hardly ever fully filled. This makes it almost impossible for the entire team to function at its top potential because a team can never adequately service all existing clients and is not able (due to time related issues) to support one another in the best way possible.

Due to the consequences of the low tenure of the consultants, the organization can be expected to lose- or miss out on a substantial amount of revenue each year.

1.3.4 Research Objective

Based on the business case of Brunel, the practical aim- and outcome of this research was to provide the organization with the tools and advice (specifically, organizations within the staffing-, secondment or recruitment sector) to be able to create an environment and/or introduce certain aspects within its day-to-day activities which will make it less likely/attractive for employees to leave the organization.

Besides this practical- and problem-solving aspect, this research aimed to achieve a theory building aspect as well by researching and combining several different theoretical aspects which are mentioned in the next section, section '1.3.5 Success & Learning / Tenure'.

Lastly, and coming back to the practical and problem-solving aspect of the research, this meant (for Brunel) that the average tenure of its consultants needed to be significantly improved to a number higher than the original number of 2.38 years.

1.3.5 Success & Learning / Tenure

As will be elaborated at a later stage in chapter '2. Literature Review / Theoretical Framework', it was estimated that, at the start of the research, two major factors contributed to the tenure of consultants at Brunel.

First, based on the exploration of practice and the personal experience of the researcher, the factor of success was identified as being a huge contributor to the tenure of consultants at the organization. For this specific research, success was identified as meeting the individual margin targets (in total Euros per year) which is set by the organization. In short, it was expected that consultants which are successful are in their role are, in theory, less inclined to jump ship and leave the organization at an early/earlier stage.

Second, and continuing the previous thought regarding the factor of success, the learning factor was also identified as a critical factor in regards to the success of consultants at the organization. This was based on the observation (exploration of practice/experience of the researcher) that Brunel, and many organizations that are similar, does not change its way of tackling the (growing) problem of low tenure. Even worse, the organization continues to act in the exact same way regarding its actions towards combatting the low tenure problem and also expects its employees (in this case, the consultants) to continue their old ways, no matter the (disappointing) results. Therefore, the organization is effectively refusing to learn from previous mistakes, something that stands in the way of ultimately solving the problem at hand.

1.3.6 Relevance

In terms of relevance, this research covers two aspects. The research is relevant to a broader problem and debate on both an academic- and practical level.

On the one side, this research explores the relationship between the tenure of employees versus the success which these employees have and the aspect of 'learning' which has an effect on the amount of success which employees have (and therefore has an effect on the tenure). As will be explained at a later stage in section '2.6.1 Research Gap', it is concluded that there has not been any targeted research performed regarding the relationship between learning, success and tenure. By aiming to (partly) fill this research gap, the academic relevance of this research is achieved.

Additionally, and on the other side, this research provides organizations and the (senior) management with tools and insights which they can use to (more) effectively tackle the low- or declining tenure of their employees which will (in turn) subdue the negative consequences like the expected decline of a substantial amount of revenue each year. This qualifies as the practical relevance.

In closing, the renewing character of this research is the fact that an area of *operations management* and *performance management* is being researched by combining the three different research variables; tenure,

success and learning, whereas previous studies only looked (at most) at the combination of two of the named research variables (e.g. success vs. tenure, or learning vs. tenure).

Finally, and therefore, it becomes apparent that the results of this research will be of the utmost importance for similar staffing-, secondment- and recruitment organizations like Brunel which can benefit from the final takeaways and contributions to the scientific research field.

1.3.7 Research Process Model

Before moving on to the specific research questions, the individual research steps need to be made clear. An effective method of doing this is by utilizing and constructing a Research Process Model (RPM), as thought of by Verschuren & Doorewaard (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2015).

The following figure displays the Research Process Model for this specific research:

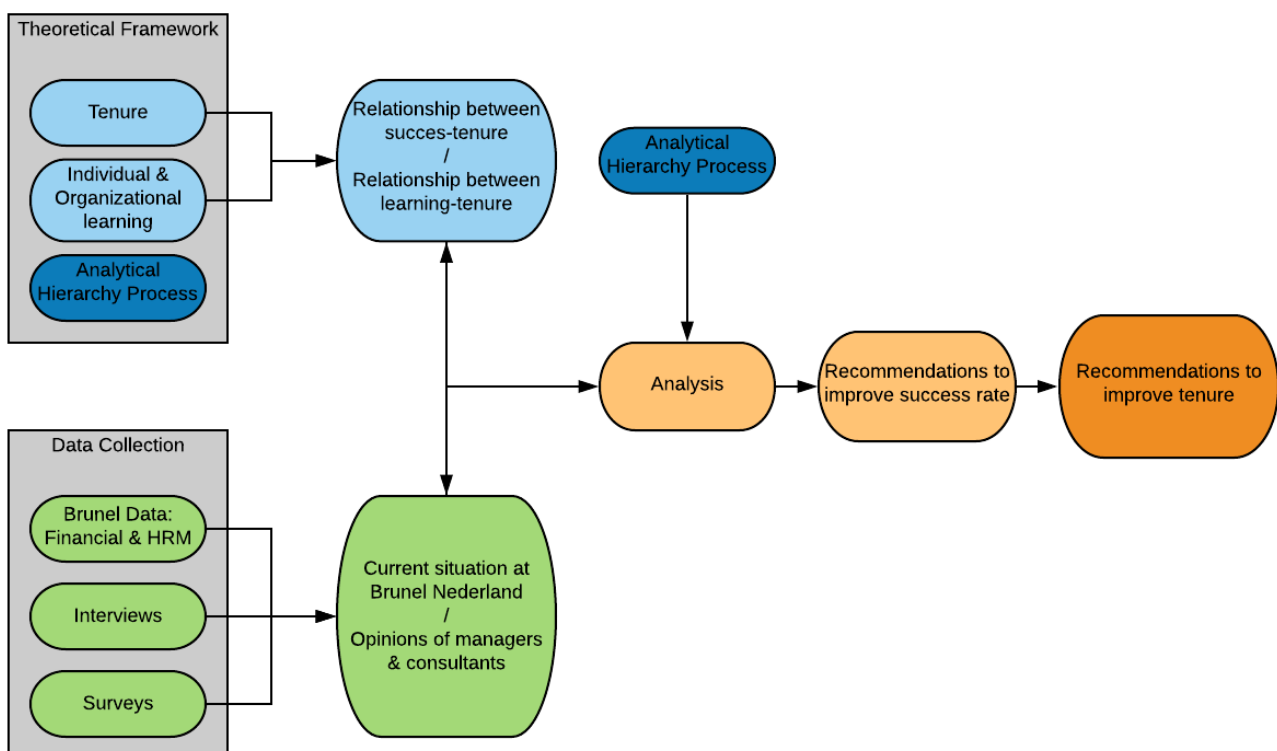


Figure 1: Research Process Model

This specific RPM can be divided into individual- and specific parts. Starting with the parts in the light blue colour, the two most important research variables are shown, the tenure and the dimension of learning (split in individual- and organizational learning). These were taken from several scientific theories in the theoretical framework. Out of this theoretical framework, the relationship between success-tenure and learning-tenure is deduced. These relationships are tested using the *Analytical Hierarchy Theory* (AHP), shown in dark blue, which relies heavily on the data which is collected at the researched organization (Brunel) which is shown in green.

Regarding the data collection, which is the practical aspect of the research, three separate- and different ways of data collection are defined. Chronologically, several orientating semi-structured interviews were held with managers and senior consultants at the organization to further back-up the exploration of practice. Following this, financial- and HRM data was accessed, explored and analysed. Seeing as, for this

specific research, success (for the consultants) was identified as meeting the individual margin targets (in total Euros per year), the data from Brunel made it possible to accurately and effectively ascertain the needed data in regards to this variable. Lastly, a large number of surveys were distributed and analysed. Combining these three methods of data collection, it became possible to (in the end) analyse and accurately describe two aspects; 1. the current situation at Brunel and 2. the opinions of managers and consultants which were necessary for the analysis using the Analytical Hierarchy Process.

Lastly, shown in light orange, all of the collected data is analysed by the AHP. This means that the variables (which are, for this research, based on theory) are compared with the day-to-day business and practical context in which Brunel finds itself in order to analyse the potential similarities, differences and other remarkable findings. This AHP analysis is coupled with additional analyses of the researcher which eventually results in recommendations to improve the success rate of consultants which ultimately lead to recommendations to improve the tenure of consultants of Brunel (shown in dark orange). Finally, to come full circle, the recommendations of this last aspect make it possible to answer the main research question of this research.

1.3.8 Research Questions

The main research question is formulated as follows:

“To what extent is ‘learning’ antecedent to ‘success’ and how can learning be leveraged by Brunel to improve the tenure of its consultants?”

To be able to answer the main research question, the following sub questions need to be answered:

1. *What is ‘tenure’?*
 - *What is the definition of ‘tenure’ according to the literature?*
 - *In which way does Brunel handle its tenure?*
2. *What is ‘success’?*
 - *What is the definition of ‘success’ according to the literature?*
 - *What does Brunel define as ‘successful’?*
3. *Which effect does ‘success’ have on tenure?*
 - *What kind of effects does the literature define?*
 - *What kind of effects does Brunel experience?*
4. *What is ‘learning’?*
 - *What is the definition of ‘learning’ according to the literature?*
 - *In which way- and quantity does Brunel learn?*
5. *Which effect does ‘learning’ have on ‘success’?*
6. *Which effect does ‘learning’ have on ‘tenure’?*
7. *To what extent is ‘learning’ antecedent to ‘success’?*

1.4 Thesis Overview

This research paper is set up in the following way.

The second chapter covers the literature review and the theoretical framework of the research. Here, the three main research variables (*tenure*, *success* and *learning*) are covered and explained in a detailed manner. In the end, the chapter concludes- and names the most important aspects from the literature and describes the research gap.

The third chapter sketches an accurate image of the research context and –setting at the organization. Here, the organization of Brunel is set out versus the known literature. The questions which are asked here surround the aspect of whether or not certain parts of the literature are present at the researched organization. This chapter ends via a conclusion as well, naming the most important discoveries and aspects which were discussed.

The fourth chapter covers the synthesis, the joining of the second and third chapter, the thesis and antithesis. By combining these different chapters, the definitive research plan was constructed. Here, the methodology is described in a detailed manner. Finally, in the concluding part of the chapter, it is stated that the total available- and collected literature covers the business case at Brunel, meaning it is a specific application of the said collected literature.

The fifth chapter contains the results of the data collection and analyses which were performed. First, the characteristics of the researched groups of employees are given. Here, the tenure, gender, age and specific business line for which these employees work are analysed. Following this, the results for the AHP analysis are given. By further analysing the results of the AHP by comparing it with the theoretical framework and the data which Brunel has collected, a final conclusion regarding the results of the data collection in regards to the effect of success-tenure and learning-tenure is eventually given.

Chapter six covers the discussion and the conclusion of this research. First, the key findings and the implications of the results of the research are addressed. The limitations of this research are also stated. Following this, the conclusion is presented. Here, a final reflection upon the research is offered and the main research question is indefinitely answered. The last section of this chapter covers the recommendations for future research and practical tools/advice is offered for the organization of Brunel.

The entire overview of this research paper is illustrated by the following model:

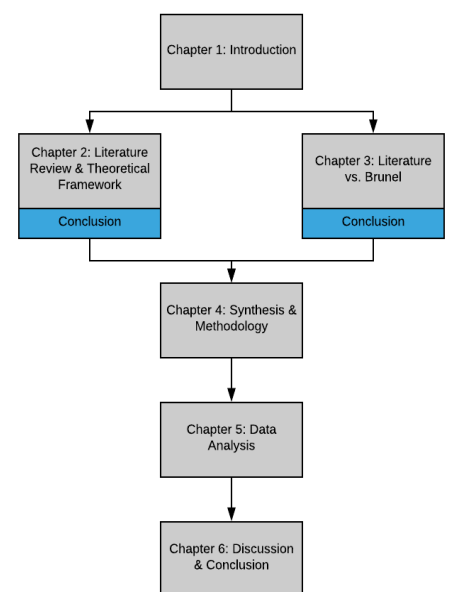


Figure 2: Thesis Overview

2. Literature Review / Theoretical Framework

2.1 General

This chapter covers the theoretical framework regarding this research. The first section, chapter 2.2, defines the variable *tenure* by stating the important literature which has covered it during the last decade. Next, the two other main variables are covered. Chapter 2.3 covers the literature review of the variable of *success* where the main definition as used in this research is set out. The next section, chapter 2.4, covers the last of the main research variables, where the moderating variable of *learning* is defined via the available literature. Finally, chapter 2.5 states the most important findings of the literature review, states the research gap and provides the conceptual model which builds the framework for the empirical research.

2.2 Tenure

As described before, tenure is defined as *“the aggregate levels of employee departures that occur within groups, work units, or organizations”* (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011). The study of tenure has a long academic history and has been conducted by organizations and management teams for over a hundred years. Research regarding this phenomenon started nearly a century ago. The first scholars referred to it as *“rates of departure”* (Greenwood, 1919) or the *“stability of employment”* (Fish, 1917). Additionally, *“turnover”* or *“churn”* are also used. Following this, methods to accurately detail the costs and calculate the rates of turnover have been around since the year 1960 (Gaudet, 1960).

Bills was the first to publish an empirical study regarding turnover and performance (Bills, 1925). Following his study, Bills introduced a predictive research design for assessing whether specific questions during the application process of applicants can predict turnover (Hom, Lee, Shaw, & Hausknecht, 2017). This approach eventually evolved into the *“standard research design”* for test validation and theory testing for most of the 20th century (Steel, 2002).

Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill & Pemberton-Jones indicate that successfully preventing employees from leaving the organization at an early stage is crucial for an organization's stability, growth and revenue. They also say that organizations can achieve this by developing and applying four strategies. First, effective communication should be encouraged. Second, hiring a diverse workforce is advised. Third, the organization should hire appropriately skilled people. And finally, the organization should offer employees development and training programs (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, & Pemberton-Jones, 2015).

The tenure of employees is also discussed by Saradhi & Palshikar. However, they refer to it as *“churn”*, which is the overall turnover in an organization's staff. They state that employee churn is closely related-but not identical to customer churn. Building on this, they also note that *“it is similarly painful for an organization, seeing as it leads to disruptions, customer dissatisfaction and time and effort lost in finding and training replacement employees”*. Saradhi & Palshikar present a case study in which they build and compare predictive employee churn models. They also propose a simple value model for employees which is used to identify how many of the churned employees were *“valuable”* (Saradhi & Palshikar, 2011). In short, the fields of customer- and employee churn are parallel to some degree and can learn a lot from each other. However, the identification of negative effects of both types of churn remains their most important contribution to literature.

In their meta-analytic review of the causes and consequences of collective turnover, Heavey, Holwerda & Hausknecht find that, amongst others, turnover is negatively related to numerous performance outcomes (Heavey, Holwerda, & Hausknecht, 2013).

Additionally, Social Capital is one of the concepts being investigated to explain performance and success differences between organizations, as described by Ommen in 2014 (Ommen, 2014). However, the

influence of organizational tenure on the development of social capital has been largely neglected. The research finds that two dimensions of social capital (Relational & Cognitive) are the most valuable. This means, for organizations, that it may be beneficial to focus on- and implement retention policies to retain employees for the minimum time it takes to build moderate levels of social capital.

Predicting employee churn, which was discussed earlier, is closely linked to Human Resource Management as well. Many scientists, like Mishra, Lama & Pal, go as far to say that it is evident that *“industries cannot survive in the long run if they do not possess predictive analytics skills from human resource management”*. Human Resource Predictive Analytics (HRPA) helps organizations prevent unnecessary HR-related costs while optimizing business performance as well as employee engagement and satisfaction (Mishra, Lama, & Pal, 2016).

Additionally, Rowley & Purcell indicate that unplanned turnover is the consequence of poor management practices, including weak HR strategies (Rowley & Purcell, 2001). They also state that the leading edge employers (which have a high tenure as compared to their competitors) all take a proactive approach to managing, and thus effectively minimize, labour turnover by sensitive HR management, which included prioritising staff and employee development.

Another important statement is the fact that research regarding tenure has, up till this point, been largely focussed on the relationship between organizational tenure and performance by focusing primarily on organizational tenure of the individual employee. Steffens, Shemla, Wegge & Diestel propose that this approach is limited because organizational tenure should be conceptualized as relating to multiple entities including teams and their leaders. They therefore state that the organizations' capacity to promote performance will be limited if they focus on organizational tenure of an individual, while neglecting the ways in which performance is shaped by organizational tenure related to multiple entities within a team (Steffens, Shemla, Wegge, & Diestel, 2014).

Another team of scientists, Mumford & Smith, state that, when exploring average workplace tenure conditioning on the individual characteristics of the workers, that tenure is longer in workplaces facing reduced market demand and higher local area unemployment (Mumford & Smith, 2004).

Due to the described gravity of the consequences of employee churn, a lot of scientist have tried to build an accurate model to predict this churn rate. Usually, different machine learning algorithms are used. Sisodia, Vishwakarma & Pujahari, in their research, give an accurate summary of popular models, such as linear support vector machine, C 5.0 Decision Tree classifier, Random Forest, k-nearest neighbor and Naïve Bayes classifier (Sisodia, Vishwakarma, & Pujahari, 2017).

Another research team (Self & Dewald) researched common characteristics in long-term employees through interviews. Here, they were able to identify certain common themes or personality traits between employees. Incorporating this knowledge into interviews can aid managers/organizations in (better) selecting their employees (Self & Dewald, 2011).

One of the most popular and -used ways to select new employees (based on the criteria which are named above) is the Big Five Personality Test (BFPT). This test, also known as the five-factor model or the OCEAN model identifies and screens candidates on five personality traits, being; openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). Since the beginning of the 1990's, Digman, Goldberg and John were the upcoming names regarding this area of expertise. Collectively, they achieved increasing confidence in the usage of the so-called five-factor model of personality in tests (Digman, 1990) (Goldberg, 1993) (John O.P., 1990). Following this, evidence has shown that utilizing these types of tests in the selection process is (to varying degrees) an accurate way to predict and attain positive job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991) (Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991). As will be explained at a later stage, this positive job performance (or; success) has a positive effect on tenure.

Presently, research on tenure in regards to selection interviews still continues. Here, research also suggests that identifying employee characteristics that show a willingness to stay is a step towards reduced turnover (Kaak, Field, Giles, & Norris, 1998).

In closing, Rowley & Purcell conducted qualitative research regarding employee churn. They set out to shed light upon the causes and consequences of labour churn in the industry, and the coping strategies and counter-measures of employers. An important take-away here is the fact that they demonstrate that labour turnover is substantially within the control of management (Rowley & Purcell, 2001).

2.2.1 Summary

In summary, a wide variety of factors contribute to a low or high tenure within an organization. We have seen that the application process on the basis of which candidates are hired is not to be underestimated. Also, the question whom organizations should hire is important. Here, it is advised to hire a diverse- and (above all) skilled workforce. Also, when employees are eventually hired, (personal) development and training programs should be prioritised by the management. And speaking of, the literature also states that tenure is under substantial control of this management and that a proactive approach should be taken in managing the phenomenon. It is proven that organizations which operate within markets with reduced demand and with a higher local area of unemployment have a longer tenure number within their workforce. Also, retention policies should be in place and regularly monitored. Following this, it is advised that an organization should undertake predictive analytic tools and/or utilize machine learning algorithms to combat a low tenure.

Finally, one aspect to combat low tenure demands special attention. It is proven on multiple occasions that recruiting and selecting on common and important (as deemed by the organization) characteristics in regards to potential employees through the application process is extremely beneficial. Research also suggests that identifying employee characteristics that show a willingness to stay is a step towards reduced turnover. In short, selecting the right characteristics, personality and competencies is viewed to be a crucial step to attain a high tenure.

The next section covers the literature review of the variable of *success* where the main definition as used in this research is set out.

2.3 Success

2.3.1 Initial hunch

The statement that Brunel had a low tenure problem with its commercial backbone of the organization, the consultants, was well known. This trend was easily measurable via the management tools and –processes which were available to the organization.

The initial decision to pursue an academic research based on the expected positive effect between the success of these consultants and their respective tenure was based on a hunch of the researcher, strongly influenced by the previous experience of this said researcher at the organization and the frequent stated assumptions and voiced opinions of the (higher) management. In short, the research quickly became focussed around making the aforementioned consultants more successful in their roles, inclining them to stay for a longer period of time.

Although Brunel uses many terms to define “being successful”, success at the organization is primarily interpreted as; realizing plenty (or at least, “enough”) projects at clients which generate revenue for the consultants, their team and the organization. This definition was chosen for two main reasons; *measurability* and *reliability*.

There are of course many other ways to interpret success, as used by the organization. A few of them are measurable as well but lack the reliability, such as achieving the set targets via KPI’s (Key Performance Indicators, (John F., 2020)) and/or other requirements which the organization has set for the consultants. Others lack both of the main criteria altogether, these are less quantifiable ways to measure success such

as functioning well inside your team, getting along with your team members and being accepted within the culture of the organization.

2.3.2 Literature

However, seeing as success, or more commonly referred to as job performance, is the most widely studied criterion variable in organizational behaviour and human resource management, (Campbell, 1990) (Heneman, 1986) (Schmidt & Hunter, 1992), additional research was done to reach a summary of the most important literature.

The most popular way to define, and more importantly; measure, job performance makes a clear distinction in *objective job performance* and *subjective job performance*. (Bommer, Johnson, Rich, Podsakoff, & Mackenzie, 1995).

Objective measurement of performance is defined as direct measurements of countable behaviours or outcomes. In short, objective measurement is mostly factual, it is easy to measure and it is relatively flawless to interpret. Objective measurement, not only of performance but of all factual/numerical figures, is commonly used by for-profit organizations (such as Brunel) in order to effectively and accurately steer and manage the organization. However, this does not mean that only (presumably) factual information such as revenue numbers, margin and profit are perceived as objective measurements of performance. Collected opinions/experiences from (from example) surveys are also, if collected correctly, eligible as objective measurement.

The second distinction, the subjective measurement of performance, is made up out of ratings regarding the employee performance from the manager or supervisor. It can be said that, even though these ratings are (usually) mutually agreed upon- and signed with a signature from both parties, the ratings which are given are less factual (seeing as most of the information is coming from one party, the supervisor) and are therefore more prone to bias and random error (Bommer, Johnson, Rich, Podsakoff, & Mackenzie, 1995). The most important takeaway of the summary above is the statement that both types of performance measurement should not be used interchangeably.

Continuing the literature review, we come across Wright & Bonett which have done a meta-analysis regarding the correlation between attitudinal commitment and job performance across various levels of employee tenure. Combining the results from 3.630 employees obtained from 27 independent studies, they found that tenure had a very strong nonlinear moderating effect on the commitment-performance correlation, with correlations tending to decrease exponentially with increasing tenure (Wright & Bonett, 2002).

Lastly, it is important to note that not all researchers agree on the positive effect between tenure and success (or job performance). Several researchers have argued that employees (in this particular case; executives) with longer tenure in their companies may become psychologically committed to the status quo and may therefore reduce the quality of decision making and company performance due to this commitment (Schwenk, 1993). Additionally, researchers did also find the opposite of which is stated here. For instance, Feldman and Ng have found that longer tenured employees generally have greater success (or performance, as they call it) within the organization (Feldman & Ng, 2010).

2.3.3 Success at Brunel

Referring back to the first part of chapter 2.3, and with the knowledge from section “2.3.2 Literature”, we can now link the previous definition of ‘success’ of this research and Brunel in order to classify this means of measuring success as objective performance measurement. As a reminder, success is primarily interpreted as; realizing plenty (or at least, “enough”) projects at clients which generate revenue for the consultants, their team and the organization. Here, “enough” refers to the target figure which has been set by the organization in regards to junior, medior and senior consultants.

As discussed before, to prevent and avoid the consultants from leaving the organization as much as possible, and in doing so increase their overall tenure, the organization will need to ensure that consultants are more successful in their roles.

However, exploration of the current situation learns us that the organization has not acted adequately regarding the low tenure of its consultants. The top management and Brunel as a whole have not renewed or revolutionized the way in which they try to commit their employees for years now.

2.3.4 Positive Effect

Therefore, and in summary, it is expected that achieving a situation where consultants are more successful in their roles will have a positive effect on their overall tenure (meaning; raising it).

However, besides the one-sided positive effect of success on tenure, a moderating variable is also present, the variable of *learning*. This variable will be covered by the next chapter, after which the conceptual model will be shown to synthesise the three main research variables.

2.4 Learning

After describing the effect which success has on the tenure of the consultants of Brunel, the moderating variable comes into play. By failing to commit its employees to the organization, something that was confirmed by the past experience of both the researcher and the higher management, Brunel has neglected to learn in regards to its insufficient actions of the past. Therefore, In summary, there have been insufficient actions to understand and eventually resolve the problem at hand.

In short, Brunel as an organization has failed to learn in regards to its actions. Organizational learning will therefore be key for Brunel.

Although researchers have defined organizational learning in different ways, the core of most definitions is that *“organizational learning is a change in the organization that occurs as the organization acquires experience”* (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). Individual learning is defined simply as *“the acquiring of knowledge or skill”* (Klein, 1998).

Ever since (Cohen & Sproull, 1991) publicized their special issue in *Organization Science* regarding organizational learning, the topic has been relevant and continuously researched.

Following this publication, another influential article was published by March. In his article, titled *“Exploration and exploitation in organizational learning”*, James March describes the relationship between the exploration of new possibilities and the exploitation of old certainties in organizational learning (March, 1991). In the article, the central argument is that adaptive processes, by refining exploitation more rapidly than exploration, are likely to become effective in the short run but self-destructive in the long run. This argument can be applied to the business process in which the consultants at Brunel operate. Consultants which are not enabled (by the organization) in learning and exploring new ways are less likely to be successful in the long term.

Scientists also state that there are four constructs related to organizational learning; knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation, and organizational memory (Huber, 1991). Huber states that the literature on organizational decision-making describes two decision making processes where successful use requires intentional learning from feedback. Finally, Huber describes that initial (job) success tends to lead to specialization and, while specialization leads to competence and therefore more success, specialization also leads to niches and regions uninhabited by competitors. In short, scientists, like organizations, tend to learn well what they do and tend to do what they have learned well (Huber G., 1991)

The continued research regarding organizational learning is mostly stimulated by practical concerns and research developments. For instance, Argote & Miron-Spektor describe the fact that at a practical level, the

ability to learn and adapt is critical to the performance and long-term success of organizations (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). March also notes that, sometimes, exploitation drives out exploration. This is because the returns to exploitation are ordinarily more certain, closer in time, and closer in space than the returns to exploration (March, 1991). In the case of Brunel, the driving out of the exploration in favour of the exploitation is clearly visible in the fact that the organization has not changed its approach to learn, be successful and/or to improve its tenure.

Following this, Brown & Duguid have discovered (via recent ethnographic studies of workplace practices) that the ways in which people actually work usually differ fundamentally from the ways organizations describe this work in manuals, training programs, organizational charts, and job descriptions (Brown & Duguid, 1991). Even though organizations tend to rely on these formal- and written instructions to achieve (organizational) success and, for instance; raise the tenure of employees, the study concludes that, with a unified view of working, learning, and innovating, it should be possible to reconceive of- and redesign organizations to improve all three (Brown & Duguid, 1991). Although, for this specific research, the “learning” aspect is of course the most relevant and interesting.

An important conclusion that (Madsen & Desai, 2010) note is the fact that their research suggests that experience with failure allows organizations to improve their performances relative to their own previous baseline. However, it is also stated that experience with success does not generate similar levels of improvement. Meaning, success is not always followed by success. This is recognized in the way in which the organization focusses on the aspects that have been going well for a long period of time (exploitation) but lack the focus on evaluating- and learning from its successes. Madsen & Desai also find that organizations learn by observing their own and others' failures and eventually suggest/conclude that organizational learning from success is far from an automatic process and in fact, difficult and hard to get right.

Ellis & Davidi have also conducted research regarding learning in regards to successes and failures. They find that learning from successful outcomes is hampered by liabilities such as reduced motivation to learn and adapt, complacent behaviour, reduced attention and information gathering, risk aversion, and tendencies to develop homogeneous attitudes or behaviours on the basis of successful outcomes (Ellis & Davidi, 2005). Therefore, to prevent organizations from resting on their laurels or developing learning patterns reflecting failure avoidance, Sitkin calls to encourage learning by experimentation (exploration) that produces new ideas leading to organizational renewal and readjustment without invoking harmful frustrations. According to his plan, modest levels of failure can promote willingness to take risks and foster resilience-enhancing experimentation (Sitkin, 1992).

Levinthal & March add to this concept by noting that learning processes are subjected to some important limitations. They go on to identify ways in which organizations sustain exploration in the face of a tendency to overinvest in exploitation (Levinthal & March, 1993). They also go on to note that, within organizational learning, there is a tendency to overlook failures. The lessons gained from success are privileged by organizational learning. As a result, the risks of failure are likely to be underestimated (Levinthal & March, 1993).

Another important aspect which is discussed by Levinthal & March is the fact that learning is likely to be misleading if the experiential record on which it draws is a biased representation of past reality, and thus of future likelihoods. They go on to say that organizational learning produces a biased history. In short, learning generates successes rather than failures.

In every domain of learning, the likelihood of success tends to increase with competence (even allowing for aspiration level adjustments). As learners settle into those domains in which they have competence and accumulate experience in them, they experience fewer and fewer failures. Insofar as they generalize that experience to other domains, they are likely to exaggerate considerably the likelihood of success (Levinthal & March, 1993).

The fact that learning generates success is also stated in a Brazilian research. Here, Brandão, Borges-Andrade, Puente-Palacios and Laros aimed to identify the predictor variables for management competencies. In other words, how successful were managers (which were the prime research subjects) in

their competencies? They hypothesized that attributes of managers (such as the learning strategies they used) and those of the branches in which they worked (such as organizational support) were associated with the expression of management competencies at work. After Multilevel Regression Analyses, it was found that intrinsic and extrinsic reflection (a learning strategy) were key towards success in the management competencies (Brandão, Borges-Andrade, Puente-Palacios, & Laros, 2012)

Stalk et al note that successful organizations are described as having capabilities for learning for responding to experience by modifying their technologies, forms, and practices (Stalk, Evans, & Shulman, 1992). Additionally, in a lesser known article, Patel proposes that firms that support different learning cultures during different stages of a business innovation process will enjoy sustained success in innovations (Patel, 2008)

Cyert & March also state that routines and beliefs change in response to direct organizational experience through two major mechanisms. The first is trial-and-error experimentation, meaning that the likelihood that a routine will be used is increased when it is associated with success in meeting a target, but decreased when it is associated with failure (Cyert & March, 1963). The other mechanism is incremental search, which is less applicable to this research.

Cyert & March also describe the fact that during very good times, when post-outcome euphoria reinterprets outcomes positively or when targets are low, only exceptionally inappropriate routines will lead an organization to experience failure. However, in like manner, during very bad times, when post-outcome pessimism reinterprets outcomes negatively, or when targets are high, no routine will lead to success (Cyert & March, 1963)

In a completely different kind of field, Madsen & Desai find that organizations learn more effectively from failures than from success and that prior stocks of experience and the magnitude of failure influence how effectively organizations can learn from various forms of experience (Madsen & Desai, 2010).

It is also indicated that decision makers interpret success experience as evidence that existing organizational knowledge represents the world well and that further (usually costly) development of knowledge is unnecessary (Lant, 1992) (March & Shapira, 1992) (Ross & Sicoly, 1979). As a result, prior successes induce organizational decision makers to ignore information about the outside world and to simplify their decision-making approaches (Audia, Locke, & Smith, 2000) (Hayward, Rindova, & Pollock, 2004).

In practice, we see this (again) in the current approach of Brunel in regards to its obsession over exploitation.

Also, when success has been achieved in the past, decision makers tend to be overconfident regarding the adequacy of their own knowledge (Louis & Sutton, 1991). This does not mean that organization members cease processing new information (or knowledge) immediately. It does however lead them, and directs their attention, towards local information sources, those that are very close to the current organizational knowledge and thus, discourages “nonlocal search” outside of the comfort zone and what is known to the organization (Cyert & March, 1963) (March, 1981).

Lastly, there are also some critics in regards to the field of organizational learning, scientists who don't necessarily agree with everything that's been written regarding the subject. Fiol & Liles are an example, they claim that no theory or model of organizational learning has a widespread and 100% acceptance. They also show the difference between organizational learning and organizational adaptation and therefore show that change does not necessarily imply learning (Fiol & Lyles, 1983).

2.4.1 Learning at Brunel

Referring back to chapter 2.4, taking into account the information gathered from the literature, the link between the aspects of learning and tenure becomes apparent.

Summarized, and as discussed in the literature, seven aspects are important in regards to individual- and organizational learning. All of the following seven aspects are expected to be of positive influence on the success of consultants (and therefore, their tenure).

The first aspect is the fact that being enabled and encouraged in learning and exploration of new ways/opportunities is advised. Just as; being enabled and encouraged to specialize yourself in a specific field/niche (second) and being able to learn from- and adapt yourself to new situations (third). Fourth, being resilient and having experience with-/knowing how to cope with failures/setbacks is advisable. Fifth, being able to reflect on prior performance and therefore learn from this is also preferred. Second to last, having a learning strategy as an individual is advised. Lastly, having a learning strategy as an organization is also advised.

2.4.2 Positive Effect

In summary, it is expected that when the organization does not enable consultants in learning and - exploration, the consequence will be that they are less likely to be successful in the long term and will therefore have a lower tenure at the organization. In other words, learning will have a positive effect on the overall tenure of consultants at Brunel (meaning; raising it).

2.5 Conceptual Model

In order to be able to conduct the research in a structured manner and, at the same time, be able to align all the theoretical viewpoints of the literature review in one framework, a conceptual model is built. This conceptual model is shown below.

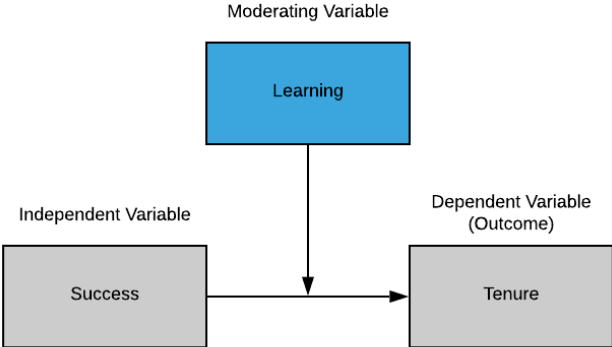


Figure 3: Conceptual Model

2.6 Conclusion

2.6.1 Research Gap

Combining all literature and research, it can be concluded that there has not been any targeted research performed regarding the relationship between learning, success and tenure. Additionally, it has been found that the relationship between 'organizational learning' and 'individual learning' has been insufficiently researched in general, let alone what the effect is in regards to 'success' and 'tenure'. The goal of this academic research was to therefore (partly) fill this research gap.

2.6.2 Conclusion

Summarizing chapter 2, covering the literature review and theoretical framework, three main research variables are discussed.

First, the variable *tenure* is discussed. Here, we discuss that there are a wide variety of factors which can contribute to a low or high tenure within an organization. Several advices are given to realize a higher tenure with special attention given to one factor; the recruitment- and selection on specific personal characteristics, competencies, mind-set and attitude of an individual. This is seen as a crucial step to attain a high tenure amongst employees.

Following this, the variable *success* was covered. Here, the definition of success was given, both at Brunel (based on gross margin (€)) and based on the literature (objective performance measurement). Following this, the link (a positive effect) between success and tenure was proven.

Lastly, the *learning* variable is discussed. Summarized, and as discussed in the literature, seven aspects are deemed important in regards to individual- and organizational learning. Finally, the link (a positive effect) between learning and tenure is proven.

2.6.3 Organizational Context

The next chapter applies the stated literature on the organization of Brunel. Here, the research sketches an accurate image of the research context and –setting and pinpoints if certain parts of the literature are present at the researched organization.

3. Organizational Context

As discussed, Brunel is a dynamic organization, operating on a global level with more than 100 offices worldwide on 6 continents. The scope, which has been discussed in an earlier stage, is set on Brunel Nederland B.V.. However, the global spread of the organization (Brunel International N.V.) is illustrated below (Brunel Nederland B.V., 2020).

Naturally, dealing with an organization of this scale (a grand total of 14k+ specialists worldwide), Brunel has a magnitude of management tools, processes and guidelines in place. Many of them also cover the three main research variables of tenure, success and learning. The following paragraphs will further elaborate on these research variables in regards to the day-to-day context and management of Brunel.



Figure 4: Global Spread of Brunel International N.V.

3.1 Tenure at Brunel

As indicated in the literature review, there are a wide variety of factors which contribute to a low or high tenure within an organization. In short, the aspects which are important are; the application process- and selection of new employees, a diverse and skilled workforce, personal development and training, a proactive approach of the (higher) management, closely monitoring the market and environment of the organization, retention policies and a focus on predictive analytic tools and/or machine learning algorithms. Lastly, special attention goes out to the recruitment- and selection on the right characteristics, competencies and mind-set in regards to potential employees.

3.1.1 Characteristics, Competencies & Mind-set

Until the end of 2018, Brunel used to analyse the personality and competencies of its consultants by utilizing the Big Five Personality Test. The Big Five Personality Test (BFPT) is, as discussed before, one of the most popular- and most used methods to select new employees based on personality traits. This personality assessment at Brunel is always accompanied by a broader selection of assessments and tests like the measurement of cognitive ability, as advised by Hughes and Batey (Hughes & Batey, 2017).

Recently however, the organization has switched towards the Performance Model, developed by HFMtalentindex (HFMtalentindex, 2020). The selection process, which incorporates its patented *HFM Talentindex*, is still the same in its structure as the Big Five Personality Test where candidates for the role of consultant at Brunel are subjected to specific assessments. The part of the HFM Talentindex which measures personality does so by subjecting an individual to questions regarding 44 individual competencies which the company has identified. Out of these 44 competencies, Brunel has selected 10 key competencies. More information regarding the HFM Talentindex and the way which Brunel incorporates this assessment in the selection of its new employees is given in chapter “4. Synthesis & Methodology”. Here, amongst others, the average total scores of hired consultants is compared to the empirical results of the surveys of this research.

The most important takeaway of Brunel’s actions regarding its selection on characteristics, competencies and mind-set is the fact that the collected literature agrees with the organization’s way of working. By utilizing the selection tests and tools at its disposal, the organization attempts to prevent a mismatch which results in employees leaving the organization at an early stage (within the first year of employment) or attempts to prevent hiring employees which end up having an overall low tenure (lower than the organization’s average at 2.38 years). This is all because, as we have said before, in attaining a high tenure, special attention goes out to the recruitment- and selection on the right characteristics, competencies and mind-set in regards to potential employees.

3.1.2 Brunel Academy & Communities

As indicated, hiring a diverse and skilled workforce and having special attention on personal development and training is crucial in attaining a high(er) tenure. To aid in this, Brunel has started two initiatives; 1. the Brunel Academy and 2. internal- and external Communities.

The Brunel Academy (Brunel Nederland B.V., 2020) is an online meeting point on the Intranet of the organization where everything revolves around both professional- and personal learning and development. By offering education and workshops, but also hosting sessions which improve someone’s soft skills, or even offering the opportunity to have a one-on-one coaching session, Brunel tries to put a big emphasis on learning and development for both its internal employees (like the consultants which are central in this research) as the specialists who work for Brunel in the field. Lastly, the Brunel Academy boasts an impressive “Brunel elibrary” which offers eBooks, books and whitepapers, available for all.

The second initiative, Brunel’s communities, are a product of the collective global strategy of the organization. This strategy consists of eight pillars, one of which focusses on building communities (Brunel Nederland B.V., 2020). These communities will, according to the organization, give employees an opportunity to continuously develop themselves. This is not only achieved by building communities of specialists with similar skills, tools and expertise (Specialized Communities) but is also achieved by grouping people together who share the same passion, concern or goal (Interest Communities) (Brunel Nederland B.V., 2020). All of this makes it possible to share knowledge and connect with peers.

Looking at the available literature which covers the topic of development vs. tenure, Brunel seems to be following the advice of experts and literature by focussing on continuous development. Great initiatives are taken and continuously developed. However, the main question will be/stay, will this be enough to reach the goal of a skilled- and developed workforce which should (in turn) maintain an rather high average tenure level within the organization.

3.2 Success at Brunel

As indicated in the literature review, to prevent and avoid the consultants from leaving the organization as much as possible, and in doing so increase their overall tenure, the organization will need to ensure that consultants are more successful in their roles.

3.2.1 Success Model / LEAN Way of Working

The biggest and most effective way in which Brunel tries to steer its employees towards success (and therefore, obtaining positive results for the organization) is via its “Success Model” (Brunel Nederland B.V., 2020). This model is based on the LEAN way of working which demands (amongst others) special attention towards a clear scope and norms (Lean Enterprise Institute, 2020). The Success model of Brunel states that focus on core-activities will provide growth. The organization therefore monitors performance via the internal KPI-dashboard, goals based on margin (€) are central, the model was built in order to make consultants successful and lastly, it applies to every consultant which works for Brunel Nederland. In closing, the Success Model is based on the “Success Formula” which provides consultants with crystal-clear targets which have to be followed/reached. These targets revolve around a monthly target of “64/32/16/8/1”, meaning; 64 contact moments with clients or specialists, 32 physical meetings with clients or specialists, 16 proposals towards clients, 8 sales meetings to discuss these proposals and a minimum of 1 realised commercial project. All of these targets have one goal in common, making sure a junior, medior or senior consultant reaches his/her margin (€) target which officially deems them, by the standards of the organization, successful.

When we assess the Success Model which Brunel applies, based on the prior literature review, we can conclude that Brunel has an effective array of management tools and models in place to analyse its employees. There is a clear baseline to determine whether or not someone is successful and Brunel can easily track the individual results of consultants. However, a big flaw is the fact that the organization does not focus (enough) on how to make these consultants successful. Mapping the required targets is not enough, there needs to be more focus on coaching, helping and guiding consultants towards success. This research aims to help fill this gap, as will be explained at a later stage.

3.2.2 The Extra Step / Communities / Values

Aside from the Success Model, Brunel has a whole lot of other (small) tools in place to facilitate- and steer consultants towards success.

The first initiative is what Brunel calls “The Extra Step”. Taking the extra step has become part of Brunel’s Core Values and revolves around the so-called “+1”. Here, the organization encourages its employees to always look for- and take the extra step in their day-to-day work, adding value wherever possible. By doing this, the organization ensures the fact that its consultants always strive towards excellence for themselves, their specialists and their clients. This will, in turn, realize a higher chance for these employees to be successful.

Another initiative comes forth from the earlier mentioned Core Values of Brunel. One of these core values is ‘Result-driven’, something that Brunel deems crucial in her day-to-day operation and in the skillset of its consultants (Brunel Nederland B.V., 2020). Putting a big emphasis on being result-driven will increase the chance, in theory, of employees (and therefore, consultants) being successful.

Lastly, the earlier mentioned communities play a (small) part in attaining success as an organization but especially for the individual consultants. As discussed, these communities revolve around continuous development. In regards to success, these communities continuously ask the question; which processes, way-of-working and tools are effective? What works? And what doesn’t?

In summary, these smaller initiatives only contribute towards the success of consultants in a minor manner. However, all of these initiatives combined allow for a much greater result, mostly revolving around continuous improvement. Therefore, a lot of links can be made with the research variable ‘learning’, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.3 Learning at Brunel

Referring back to the literature review, seven aspects are important in regards to individual- and organizational learning. First, being enabled and encouraged in learning and exploration of new ways/opportunities is advised. Just as; being enabled and encouraged to specialize yourself in a specific field/niche (second) and being able to learn from- and adapt yourself to new situations (third). Fourth, being resilient and having experience with-/knowing how to cope with failure/setbacks is advisable. Fifth, being able to reflect on prior performance and therefore learn from this is also preferred. Second to last, having a learning strategy as an individual is advised. Lastly, having a learning culture as an organization is also advised.

Brunel utilizes a lot of tools in order to maintain a constant focus on learning. However, as is the main trigger for this academic research, it has been established that there are a lot of opportunities where the organization can improve regarding this aspect.

3.3.1 Brunel Management System

The main way in which Brunel tries to manage its learning on an individual- and organizational level, and which hasn't been discussed before, is via its Brunel Management System (BMS) (Brunel Nederland B.V., 2020). The BMS contains the policy of Brunel Nederland, the organizational structuring and the processes and work instructions. By utilizing this system, Brunel reaches her goals, increases her efficiency and ups its shareholder satisfaction. The Brunel Management System is displayed below.

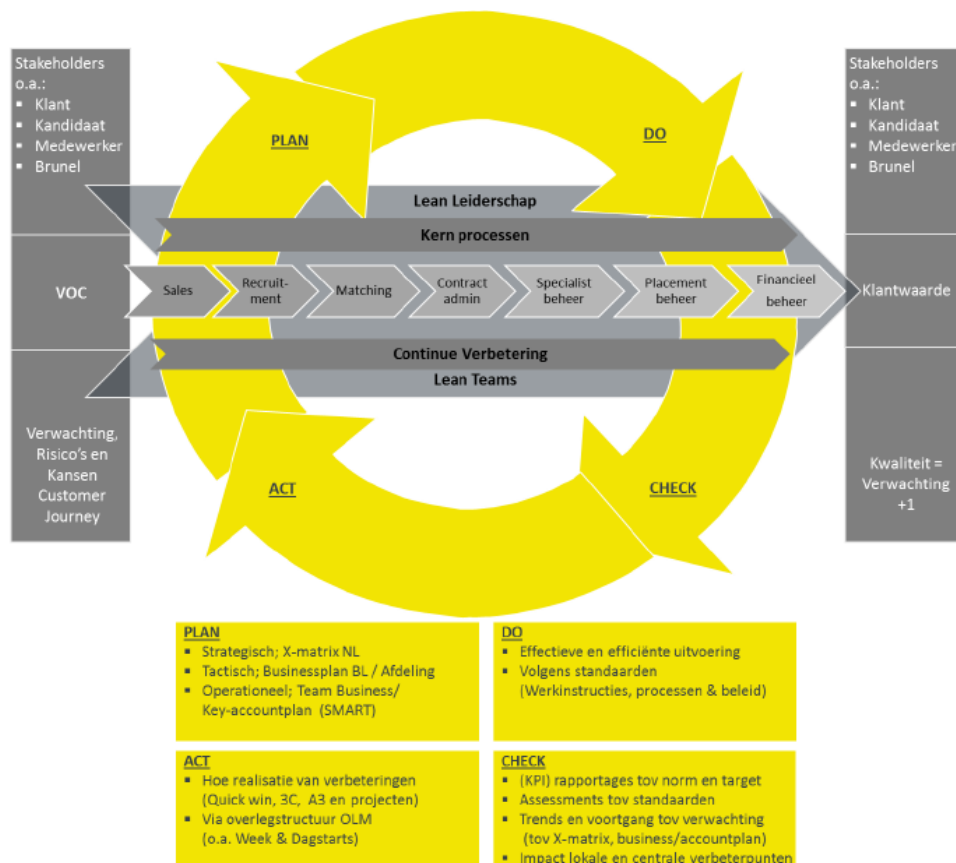


Figure 5: Brunel Management System

Again, continuous improvement is key here. In short, the organization works with a plan and in a result-orientated way (PLAN), works conform the paths which have been set by the guidelines and procedures of the organization (DO), regularly checks the progress via KPI's and the set targets (CHECK) and, finally, corrects itself where necessary via continuous improvement (ACT). Brunel claims that learning is a constant focus throughout the entire process as described above. However, taking a closer look at the inner workings of the BMS, it becomes apparent that the focus regarding this aspect is divided. Here, the consultant receives a part of the focus on learning, but so do the clients of Brunel, the specialists of Brunel and Brunel as an organization. Therefore, we can carefully conclude that there is not enough dedicated focus in order to specifically raise the level of the consultants by utilizing- and further expanding a learning focus.

3.3.2 Communities / The Extra Step / LEAN / Brunel Academy

A number of other initiatives play a role in the individual- and organizational learning aspect for Brunel, albeit smaller. All of them have been discussed in this chapter at an earlier stage.

First up are the communities. Just as with the aspect of success, the fact that these communities give employees an opportunity to continuously develop (Specialized Communities/Interest Communities) links well with a continued focus on learning.

Second, always making sure that employees take 'the extra step' (+1), accompanied by the LEAN way of working, is a sure way of solidifying a continued improvement in terms of learning.

Lastly, the Brunel Academy, deems no real further introduction or explanation regarding the potential in aiding the pursuit of continued learning by both the individual consultants and the organization as a whole.

3.4 Conclusion

As discussed at the start of the chapter, Brunel has a magnitude of management tools, processes and guidelines in place. As we have seen, many of them also cover the three main research variables of tenure, success and learning.

We can conclude that Brunel has, in her day-to-day context and current management style, tried to cover all of the three main research variables. Continuous effort is being made to ensure that the selection of new employees addresses the correct factors (in terms of personality/mind-set) and that everything is done in order to keep current consultants from leaving the organization at an early stage. The organization also analyses her data and tries to steer its workforce in an effective manner by utilizing KPI's and several management models, with smaller initiatives like the communities and "taking the extra step" contributing in their own way. Lastly, effort is made to keep the organization in a cycle of learning. This happens, one the one hand, by managing via the Brunel Management System, on the other hand (again), by utilizing the smaller initiatives like the Brunel Academy.

The main question is however, is this working? And even more important; is it enough? The next chapters will cover these questions by providing a synthesis of the collected knowledge, literature and experience. Following this, the methodology is described in a detailed manner. Finally, in the concluding part of the next chapter, it is decided if the total available- and collected literature covers the business case at Brunel (meaning it is a specific application of the said collected literature) or that gaps need to be filled.

4. Synthesis & Methodology

4.1 Overview

This fourth chapter covers the synthesis, the joining of the second and third chapter. By combining these different chapters, the definitive research plan and methodology was constructed. In the methodology section, key aspects are discussed such as; the research design, the case selection and the data collection are covered. Also, the specific surveys that have been used in this research and the method of data analysis (Analytical Hierarchy Process) are explained.

4.2 Synthesis

By combining both the second chapter (the literature review/theoretical framework) and the third chapter (the organizational context of Brunel), a grounded synthesis is produced.

4.2.1 Tenure

When we start at the variable of *tenure*, a number of observations can be made. In short, we have established that there are a wide variety of factors which contribute to a low or high tenure within an organization. In short; the application process- and selection of new employees, a diverse and skilled workforce, personal development and training, a proactive approach of the (higher) management, closely monitoring the market and environment of the organization, retention policies and a focus on predictive analytic tools and/or machine learning algorithms. Lastly, special attention goes out to the recruitment- and selection on the right characteristics, competencies and mind-set in regards to potential employees.

Besides some small initiatives like the Brunel Academy and the communities, we must conclude that the only real difference that Brunel is making in regards to the low tenure is via its selection process in which the assessment of the HFM Talentindex is utilized. We can therefore conclude that this effort is, most likely, not enough to combat the phenomenon of the declining tenure of consultants at the organization. If the organization fails to do so, the consequences which were stated earlier like the decline in the effective transferring of information, declining relationships with clients/specialist and teams that are not functioning at their top potential, are bound to have a negative impact on the (financial) results of the organization.

4.2.2 Success

As discussed, there are two ways to measure *success* (or; performance). The way Brunel measures performance, based on the fact if a consultant reaches his/her margin target per year (in €) is a clear case of objective measurement of performance. This definition was chosen for two main reasons; measurability and reliability. To measure, analyse and help consultants reach this goal, the organization has many tools available, like; the Success Model, LEAN, “The Extra Step”, communities and ensuring the organization is acting in line with its core values. In summary, based on the literature, it is expected that achieving a situation where consultants are more successful in their roles will have a positive effect on their overall tenure (meaning; raising it). Therefore, it had to first be decided if the consultants which were successful at Brunel really had a longer tenure as opposed to worse ranking consultants. If so, the following question was obvious; how does Brunel achieve this? And, how will Brunel manage to facilitate more consultants in becoming (more) successful at their job? This was one of the main goals of the data collection and analysis, as will be explained in the methodology chapter.

4.2.3 Learning

Of course, while a big part of the data collection and –analysis revolved around answering this previous question, one aspect was already proved to bring success for consultants; *learning*. The literature review stated that there are seven aspects which are deemed important in regards to individual- and organizational learning. In short, these were; exploration, specialization, adaptability, having resilience and having

experience with dealing with failures, reflexivity, individual learning strategy and organizational learning strategy.

As was stated, effort is made by Brunel to keep the organization in a cycle of learning. This happens, on the one hand, by managing via the Brunel Management System, on the other hand (again), by utilizing the smaller initiatives like the Brunel Academy, the communities, LEAN and “The Extra Step” program.

The research variable of learning was given special attention in regards to researching the possible connection with increased success (and therefore, a higher tenure). Here, the main question revolved around the magnitude in which the research variable had an influence on the other two variables and, especially, in comparison with the other options/solutions to increase the success of consultants which were proposed by the research groups of this study. More information regarding these aspects will be provided in the methodology section.

4.2.4 Conclusion

In general, we can conclude that most of the aspects of the covered literature regarding tenure, success and learning, are present at Brunel. The organization has been trying (for the last couple of years at least) to analyse the current situation and phenomena regarding the three main research variables. Following this, the organization has tried to develop solutions, tools and management styles to combat the discussed (negative) trends.

However, the fact that the aspects of the covered literature are present, does not mean that they are effectively applied and that the organization is executing their practice in a flawless manner. Following this, the actions regarding facilitating employees towards becoming successful are to be watched with special attention. Here, the main discussion will revolve around the questions; what is expected to work? And, what is not?

Taking the entire synthesis into account, we can conclude that the total available- and collected literature covers the business case at Brunel. This means that this research is a specific application of the said collected literature. However, this does not nullify the earlier identified research gap regarding the fact that there has not been any targeted research performed regarding the relationship between learning, success and tenure.

4.3 Methodology

This section covers the methodology of the research. First, the type of research and the research objective is covered. Following this, the research design, case selection and data collection are explained in a more detailed manner. Next, the key factors of success, which are central in the surveys which were conducted for this research, are covered. Following this, the Analytical Hierarchy Process is explained, accompanied by the AHP-model which was used. Lastly, the way in which the quality of this research has been ensured is covered in the final part of this section.

4.3.1 Type of Research / Research Objective

This research utilizes the *Multiple Case Study* design in order to gain an accurate view of the views of two individual research groups on the relationship between success-tenure and learning-tenure. On the one hand, a group of managers will be subjected to a survey, the other group consists of a group of senior consultants, more information regarding this set-up will be presented in the next section.

As indicated before, the results of this research will be of the utmost importance for similar staffing-, secondment- and recruitment organizations like Brunel which can benefit from the final takeaways and contributions to the scientific research field. However, because it is a specific case study, the research has been set up in a relative small scale to ensure enough depth and complexity (Eisenhardt, Building Theories from Case Study Research, 1989).

As indicated by the main research question, the aim- and objective of the research is to determine the best way(s) for the organization to improve the tenure of its consultants via the research variable 'success' and 'learning'.

In order to achieve this, the first objective will be to use quantitative methods to identify key factors which play a part in the tenure of the consultants in regards to their (lack of) success. This way, it can be ascertained which factors are most important in regards to the (low) tenure of the consultants and in which way Brunel handles their tenure.

Following this, the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP), which is part of Multiple-criteria decision-making (MCDM) method, will be used to quantify the weights of these different criteria through pair-wise comparison in order to eventually determine the hierarchy of the researched factors in regards to their importance for the tenure of consultants. More information regarding the Analytical Hierarchy Process will be presented in the next section.

4.3.2 Research Design / Case Selection / Data Collection

This research consist primarily of quantitative empirical research where data was collected from both primary and secondary sources.

The primary sources consist of; 1. first and foremost, different surveys which were conducted by the researcher, this was also the most important method of collecting data for this research, 2. a number of semi-structured interviews with important internal stakeholders at Brunel focussed on orientation of the research case, and 3. several internal data files (Microsoft Excel) which display (amongst others) all projects and accompanying margin results of the consultants of Brunel (starting from 01-01-2017 and onwards), lists portraying the demographics, salary, tenure and other information regarding these employees and a lists containing HFM Talentindex assessments-scores of hired consultants. Additional internal- and organization specific information was personally collected by the researcher. The primary use of all these sources was to ascertain- and confirm the way in which Brunel acts regarding its tenure, its way of managing success and its way of facilitating individual- and organizational learning.

The secondary sources consisted of books and (scientific) articles which describe or synthesize specific information regarding the three research variables or the Analytical Hierarchy Process as part of the Multiple-criteria decision-making method. These sources were researched in order to make sure that this specific research (especially the literature review/theoretical framework) is up to standards in terms of the demands that have been set for academic- and scientific research.

The reason for selecting more than one type of method to collect data is based on the aim to achieve a high level of insight into the three research variables. Eisenhardt & Graebner state that this selection of multiple methods is crucial for the triangulation of insights (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

In terms of case selection, as is obvious at this point, the research subjects are the consultants which work for Brunel. This population consists of several hundreds of people, working for specific business lines within the organization (Engineering, IT, Finance, Legal and Marketing & Communication). All employees of the organization which are currently working as a consultant within Brunel Nederland (junior, medior or senior) are eligible to be included as a research subject.

The primary research method is, as indicated before, a survey which was conducted at a relatively early stage of the research. For this survey, the two groups were required to compare a large number of key success factors for consultants via pairwise-comparison. More information regarding these success factors is given in chapter '4.3.3 Key Factors of Success / Survey'.

The survey was conducted under two groups, the first of these groups is the group of Managing Consultants (MC's) which are responsible for managing the teams in which the consultants work. These so-called MC's generally have, based on their own experience and relatively long tenure (on average) within the organization, a grounded view on which factors are important in determining the success of a consultant

(and ultimately, its accompanied tenure). Besides Managing Consultants, the second group consists of experienced senior consultants. Generally, these consultants have a good understanding of the factors which lead to success and a long- or short tenure as well. The only difference is the fact that they don't lead a team of consultants, at least not officially.

To reach a qualitative and grounded data sampling, the non-random sampling method was used (Langley & Abdallah, 2011). Here, the main goal was to reach a group of respondents which was as diverse as possible in terms of different tenure, gender, age and responsible business line. Where possible, the researcher made selections in an attempt to reach this diverse state of the group of respondents. More information regarding the selection of employees for the two research groups is given in chapter '5.2.2 Respondents – Groups'.

Researchers aiming to utilize the Analytical Hierarchy Process often use the AHP Excel template designed by the *Business Performance Management Singapore* Group (Goepel K., 2013) (Goepel K., 2020) which is specifically tailored to this research. In order to use this template, a total of 40 respondents is necessary. In this specific research, this group of 40 respondents is distinguished into the two earlier stated groups, 20 managers and 20 consultants. The Analytical Hierarchy Process, and the aforementioned Excel template, will be explained in chapter '4.3.4. Analytical Hierarchy Process'.

Within Brunel, a grand total of 89 employees were eligible to partake in the aforementioned survey, all of them were individually contacted. The demands for this qualification were their tenure (they had to have a tenure of >2.38 years, which is above the average tenure of consultants at Brunel), had to have a FTE factor of at least 0.8 (working at least 32 hours per week) and had to have a specific position/title within the organization. For managers, this meant a title of either a Managing Consultant or a Business Unit Manager role (one level higher in the hierarchy). The Business Line Manager (two positions higher) and positions which are even higher than that (Directors, CEO, CFO, COO, etc.) were specially left out because of the relatively high gap in responsibilities and lack of day-to-day exposure with consultants. Also, the Managing Consultant and the Business Unit Manager are positions which are mostly filled by ex-consultants. For the Business Line Manager and up, this is not so common.

For consultants, the role of Senior Consultant was the baseline. Two other roles that qualified to partake in the research were the Account Executive and the Key Account Manager. Again, these are two roles which senior consultants regularly evolve into.

4.3.3 Key Factors of Success / Survey

As indicated before, the surveys which were presented to the two research groups revolved around the pairwise-comparison of a large number of key success factors for consultants. These key success factors were collected and summarized from two main data sources.

On the one hand, and primarily, the literature review has provided most of the key success factors for the quantitative research. Following this, the information from the semi-structured interviews with important internal stakeholders at Brunel provided the rest. After summarizing the two sources, the collection of key success factors was divided into five groups. Naturally, one group contained factors which are tied to the *learning* research variable. Another group is dedicated towards the *background* of consultants and contains factors like age and gender. The other three groups are dedicated towards *facilitating & motivating, coaching & guidance* and *competencies & mind-set*. This last group is, of course, also no surprise seeing the prominent role which the focus on the right competencies, characteristics and mind-set has taken in the literature review.

Before the final list of key success factors could be compiled, as displayed below, all of the five groups and the underlying factors had to be converted into measurable items, criteria or factors. In the end, the following groups and factors were identified:

Fitness/Suitability of background

- The highest level of completed education of consultants;
- The age of consultants;
- The gender of consultants;
- The previous work experience of consultants (in total years).

The facilitating and motivating of employees

- The primary benefits/rewards of consultants (salary);
- The (possibility of) personal development of consultants in terms of positions, personal growth and salary;
- Having realistic commercial targets/expectations to work towards as a consultant;
- The portfolio of clients which a consultant receives;
- The atmosphere within the team which the consultant joins;
- Having a clearly defined commercial scope/focus as a consultant when joining the organization.

Receiving the adequate amount of coaching and guidance

- Being coached and supervised as a consultant by a senior colleague;
- The introduction(period) and guidance which consultants receive when joining the organization;
- Having a competent manager/supervisor as a consultant;
- The level of experience of the team which consultants join;
- Receiving clear guidelines and set rules in regards to day-to-day activities as a consultant.

Possessing the right competencies and mind-set

As a consultant:

- Having a result orientated attitude;
- Having strong communicational skills;
- Having ambition;
- Having confidence, guts and/or courage;
- Having affinity with-/interest in the staffing sector;
- Having determination;
- Having an entrepreneurial attitude.

Having a focus on learning

As a consultant:

- Being enabled and encouraged in learning and exploration of new ways/opportunities;
- Being enabled and encouraged to specialize yourself in a specific field/niche;
- Being able to learn from- and adapt yourself to new situations;
- Being resilient and having experience with-/know how to cope with failure/setbacks;
- Being able to reflect on prior performance and learn from this;
- Having a learning strategy as an individual.

As an organization:

- Having a learning culture as an organization.

4.3.4. Analytical Hierarchy Process

The Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) is a structured method for organizing and ultimately weighing and condensing several variables or criteria to a single scale (expressing the desirability of a decision). The weights of different criteria can be extracted from experts' knowledge and experience in order to ascertain the relative weight of these different factors through pair-wise comparisons. (Saaty, 1990). It is one of the best known and widely used Multi-Criteria Analysis approaches (Rebstock & Kaula, 1996). Also, looking back to chapter '2.3.2 Literature', the AHP is used because it relies on *objective measurement of performance* in order to work.

The standard AHP-model consists of a three-part hierarchy; a goal, different criteria and the alternatives. The goal describes what has to be reached, the criteria whichever aspects are the most- or least important to reach this goal and the alternatives represent the different options that are available to choose from. However, in our specific research-case, we are not trying to finalize our decision towards one of the options (one of the alternatives). This is due to the fact that the five criteria that we have identified all have underlying sub criteria.

The criteria and sub criteria to promote success have been arranged hierarchically. Furthermore, the included set has been inferred by collecting data from several sources. As discussed before, the initial set of criteria was formulated by an extensive literature review which added many items to the list of criteria and particularly contributed to the 'learning' and 'competencies & mind-set' criteria. Following this, several semi-structured interviews have been conducted with managers/supervisors and senior consultants to further add to the list of items.

Combining the research above, a total of 5 criteria and 29 different sub criteria were formulated.

4.3.5 Analytical Hierarchy Process Model

By utilizing the Analytical Hierarchy Model, while taking everything into account, our goal is three-sided. On the one hand, we are trying to identify and evaluate different factors (or criteria, five in total) which promote success for consultants in order to rate/weigh them hierarchically. Additionally, we also aim to evaluate and rate the underlying sub criteria.

Second, we aim to specifically analyse one of the criteria; the aspect of learning. This is due to the expected antecedence of learning towards success, and therefore; the tenure. We aim to ascertain if this expected effect exists and to find out where the criterion will rate in terms of the hierarchy.

And finally, the last goal was to shed light on the differences between the perceptions analysed from the group of managers/supervisors and the group of senior consultants.

Combining the goal, criteria and sub criteria, the Analytical Hierarchy Process Model is formulated pictorially in the following way:

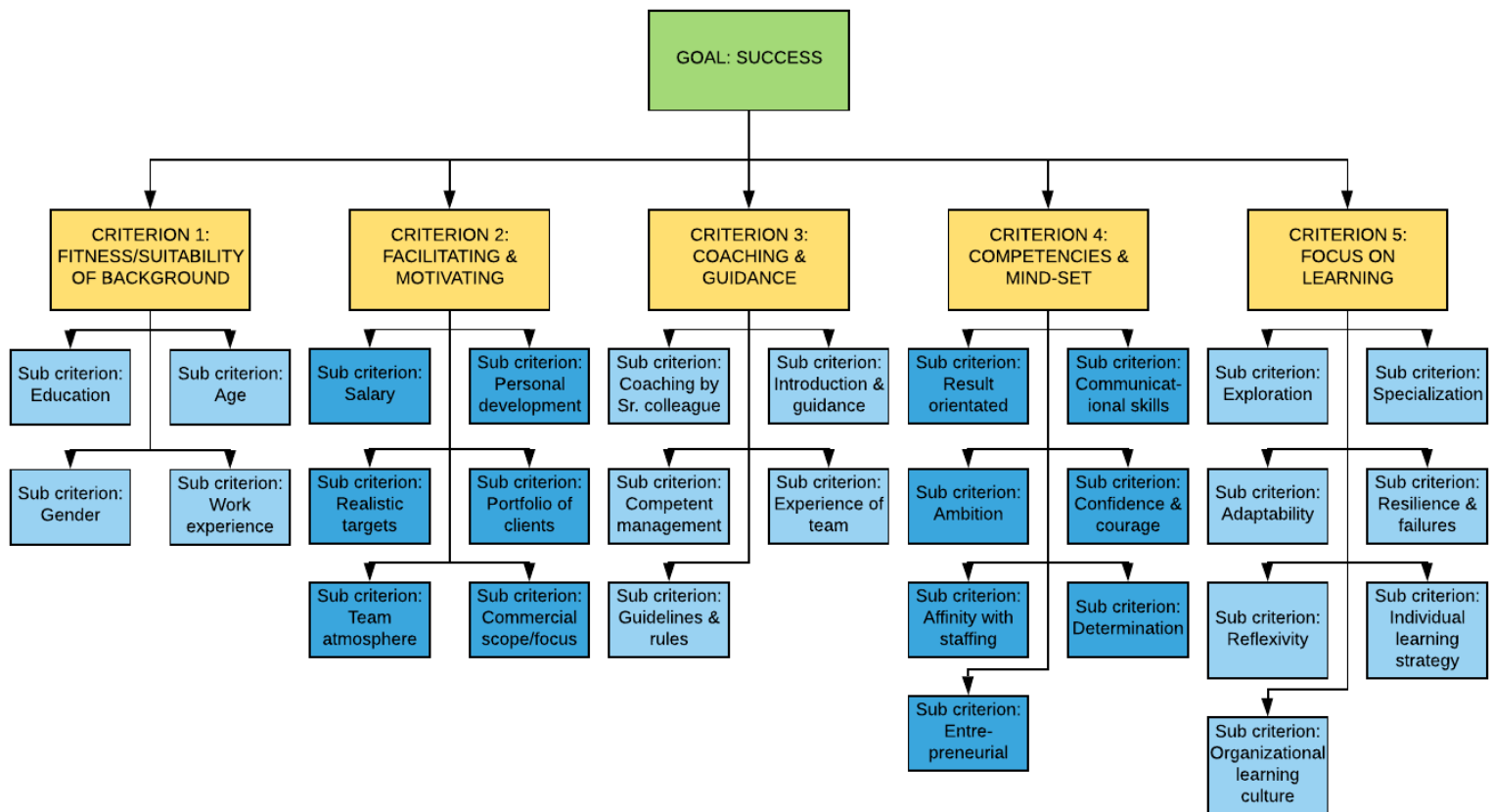


Figure 6: Analytical Hierarchy Process Model

As an example, when looking at Criterion 1 ‘The fitness/suitability of the background’ and its sub criteria, the (right) background of a consultant is of influence towards being successful. This criterion will be compared towards the other four criteria (pairwise-comparison) to ascertain which one is the most/least important regarding the promotion of success. Also, per criterion, the underlying sub criteria will be researched via pairwise-comparison to ascertain which factor carries the most weight towards that main criterion.

Summarizing the process above, the criteria were analysed with 10 pairwise-comparisons and the sub criteria were analysed with 73 pairwise-comparisons.

Lastly, an additional Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was undertaken via *Microsoft Excel*, utilizing the detailed analysis of the results of the Analytical Hierarchy Process, to compare the means of the two researched groups in order to determine if there were significant statistical differences present or that this could be accounted for by a margin of error.

4.3.6 Quality

The quality of an academic research depends on a number of factors. The most important factors are the internal validity, the external validity, the construct validity and the reliability.

Internal validity is closely tied to proving causality (Yin, 2003). However, causality fits an explanatory research whereas the nature of this specific research is more exploratory. Therefore, this form of validity is not required.

The external validity however, is required. The external validity is closely tied to the relevance of this research, as discussed earlier. The external validity is the degree of which the results of this research can be applied on other similar situations and/or business cases. This validity is reached by doing an extensive and (even more important) complete literature review and having a fitting data sampling and method of case selecting. Besides that, the repeatability of the research is also of importance (Yin, 2003). This means that, when the research is repeated in another setting, the results of this research should be either identical (this means the research is repeated in the literal sense) or different but explanatory (meaning; these results can be explained by applying the literature).

This specific research is deemed externally valid due to the multiple cases (the two groups) which were studied and compared to each other based on the available- and collected literature. However, in order for the research to be more easily applied on other research settings and business cases, there could have been more studied cases (groups) for this specific research.

The construct of validity revolves around the degree of which the collected research data is joinable with the theoretical framework (Yin, 2003). Here, there are three guidelines which have to be followed. First, the data/conclusions should be devised from a multitude of sources. As discussed before, this research has utilized surveys, internal data, semi-structured interviews and literature. The second guideline dictates that the “chain of evidence” should be transparent in terms of evidence. To ensure this transparency, all of the used sources were constantly registered and saved, especially the results from the survey. Lastly, it is dictated that effort should be made to provide the research subjects with feedback/information regarding their input in the research. In order to reach this, appointments were made to present the final results of this research and the individual surveys (if requested).

Lastly, the construct of reliability is a huge indicator of the quality of an academic research. Reliability covers the way in which the research has been performed and, more importantly, how it can be repeated (Yin, 2003). In order to reach this, having a transparent research definition, -plan and clear –methodology is critical. The specific questions which are asked in the qualitative or quantitative research methods are important too. Therefore, the list of questions which are asked in the specific survey are described in a detailed manner. Also, a link to the format which was used for the data analysis of the survey (via the AHP) is provided and an example is added in the appendix. Lastly, as Yin (2003) advices, the first survey of this research was conducted alongside the respondent in order to make sure that all the questions were interpreted in the correct way and to give the researcher the opportunity to adjust the survey where needed.

4.4 Summary

To summarize, this chapter covered the synthesis, the joining of the literature review/theoretical framework and the specific application of this on the organization of Brunel. Following this, it became possible to construct the research plan, the methodology.

The next chapter contains the results of the data collection and the analyses which were performed.

5. Results

5.1 General

This chapter contains the results of the data collection and the analyses which were performed.

Initially, the question if success leads to a longer- or increased tenure in the first place is answered. Following this, the characteristics of the researched groups of employees are given. Here, the tenure, gender, age and specific business line for which these employees work are analysed. Following this, the results for the AHP analysis are given. By further analysing the results of the AHP by comparing it with the theoretical framework and the data which Brunel has collected, a final conclusion regarding the results of the data collection in regards to the effect of success-tenure and learning-tenure is given.

5.1.1 Success-Tenure

As indicated, to answer the question if learning is antecedent to success (in order to improve the tenure of the consultants), the initial question that needs to be answered is if success leads to a longer- or increased tenure in the first place.

Summarizing the primary data which has been collected from the Microsoft Excel files which were produced by the Financial-, Controlling- and the Human Resources department (consisting of both financial data (the projects from 2017-2019) and data regarding the employees (demography, tenure, etc.), the following preliminary statements can be made:

- The average tenure of all consultants at Brunel is 2.38 years respectively. Out of the five major business units (BU), Legal has the highest average tenure with 2.77 years and the BU Marketing & Communication has the lowest with 1.26 years of average tenure.
- Consultants which are successful (meaning; when they meet their set margin targets (€)) are proven to have an average tenure of 4 to 4.5 years respectively. To put this in perspective, out of the total 372 consultants, 25.5% meet the junior target, 17.5% meet the medior target and 11.8% meet the senior target (respectively).
- Out of the consultants which have left the organization between 2017-2019 (120 in total with an average tenure of 2.34 years), approximately 95% failed to meet their set margin target.

Summarizing the analysis above, the conclusion can be made that in regards to the current situation at Brunel, success does lead to a longer- or increased tenure of the researched consultants.

5.2 Survey Analysis

This paragraph revolves around the analysis of the survey results. First, the respondents are analysed in an individual manner. Here, segments are made in regards to tenure, gender, age and business lines. Next, the same is done, but this time the respondents are segmented into their original groups, a group of managers and a group of consultants.

5.2.1 Respondents - Total

Of the grand total of 89 employees which were eligible for this research and were contacted, 48 of them responded and filled in the survey, meaning a response rate of 53.9%.

The tenure of the entire group of respondents is divided in the following way. It should be noted that one single respondent declared a tenure of 1-2 years. Seeing that one of the qualifications for the eligibility of the research was a tenure of >2.38 years (on which the researcher specifically targeted suitable consultants/managers), and although this specific answer could have been a mistake on the employees behalf, this respondent was ultimately removed from the group of respondents.

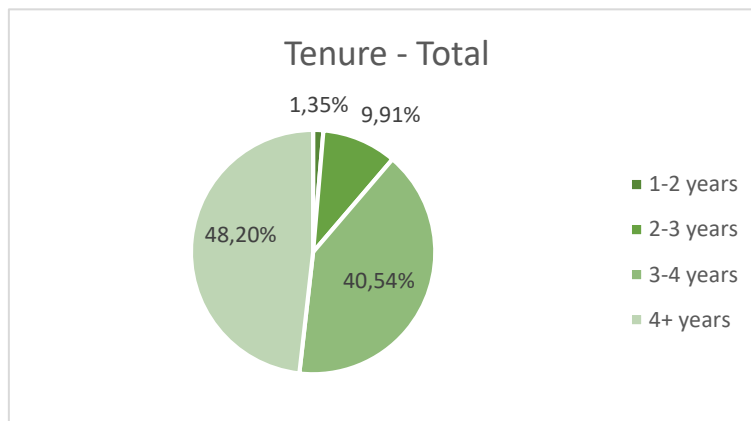


Figure 7: Tenure - Total

Of the entire group of respondents, the gender is divided in the following way. Here we can see that the group of male respondents largely outnumbers the female respondents, roughly 1:2.

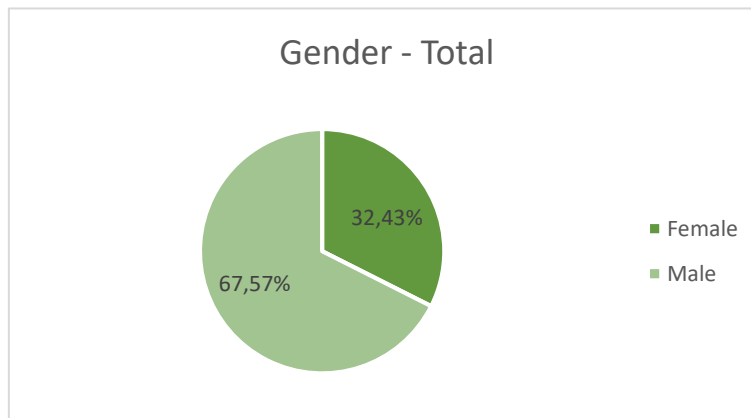


Figure 8: Gender - Total

The following chart indicates the age difference between the respondents. It is remarkable (but expected) that the groups '20-29' and '30-39' years old outweigh the other age groups by a huge margin.

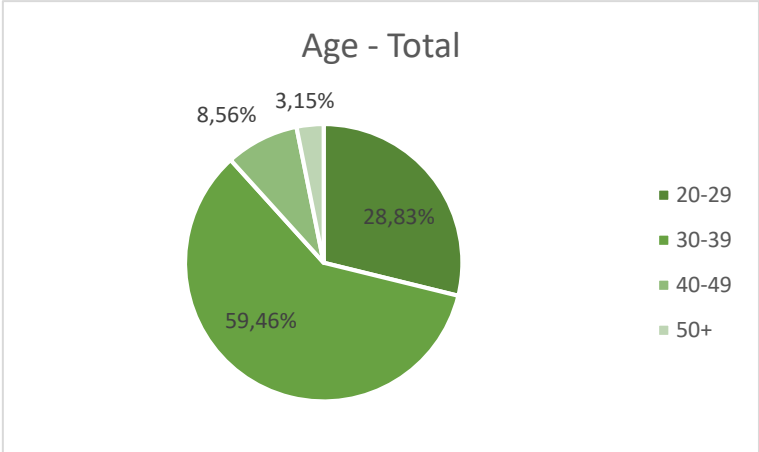


Figure 9: Age - Total

Lastly, the differences in regards to the business lines are indicated below. A huge representation of the Engineering business line can be noted. Although this makes sense due to the fact that this is the largest business line within the organization (43% of all managers and senior consultants are part of the business line Engineering), efforts were made in the further selection of respondents to create an as diverse group of definitive respondents as possible.

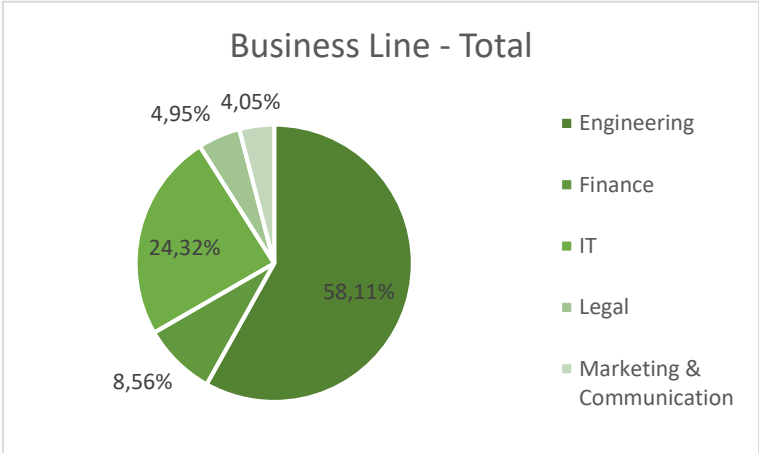


Figure 10: Business Line - Total

5.2.2 Respondents - Groups

The total number of respondents (48) consisted of 28 consultants and 20 managers. After the 20th manager filled in the survey, the data collection was halted due to the lack of new surveys being returned by managers.

The group of consultants which filled in the survey was larger. Out of the 28 consultants, 20 were ultimately selected. This selection was based on the objective to reach an as diverse group of respondents as possible. Out of all the respondents from the group of consultants (consisting of 28 in total), 12 of them were male consultants of the business unit Engineering, of which 10 out of the 11 consultants were in the 20-29 or 30-39 age groups. This group (amounting to 43% of the total) was given the lowest priority in the decision to be included in the final group of respondents for the group of consultants. Meaning, every other respondent

was given priority until these respondents were “exhausted” upon which the remaining “slots” were filled with the aforementioned respondents which were abundant.

Taking all of the above into mind, the following difference in tenure can be noted in the comparison between managers and consultants.

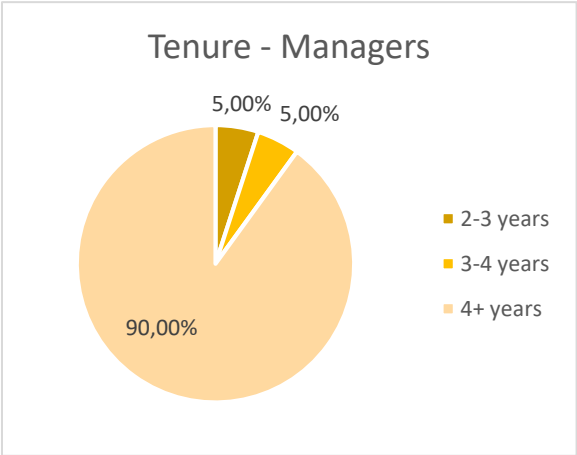


Figure 11: Tenure - Managers

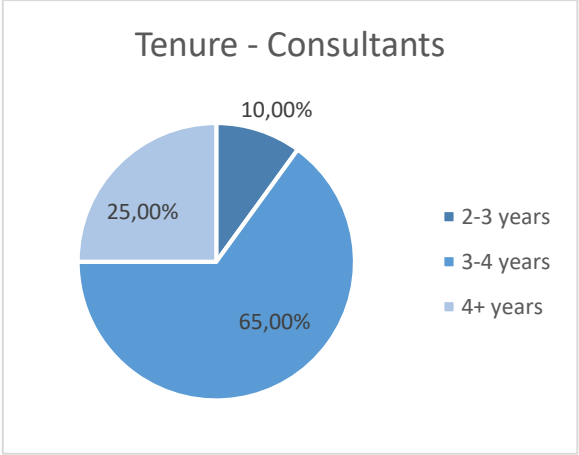


Figure 12: Tenure - Consultants

The comparison below illustrates the gender difference between the two groups. Due to some selections from the researcher, the group of consultants has an almost 50/50 distribution in terms of gender. For the group of managers, it can be noted that the group of male managers outweighs the group of female managers by a huge amount.

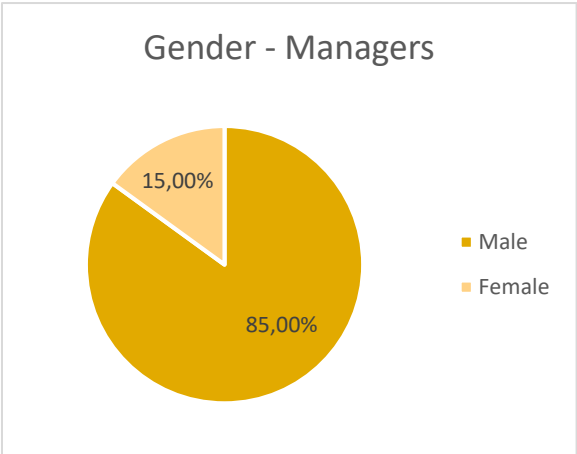


Figure 14: Gender - Managers

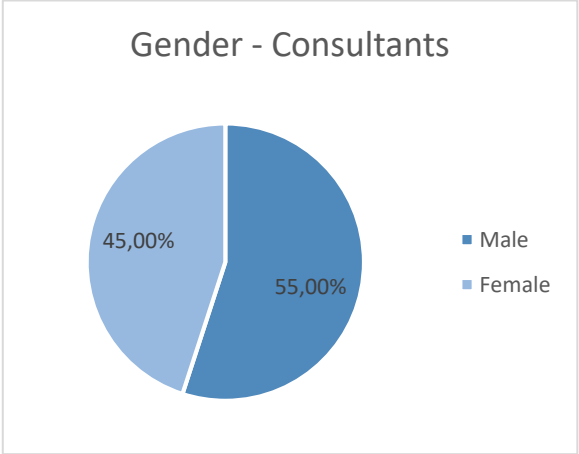


Figure 13: Gender - Consultants

An (expected) difference is also noted in regards to the age difference in the comparison between the group of managers and consultants. Almost all managers are 30 years old or older, which can be expected in regards to a responsible position within the organization. The group of consultants is balanced with almost all respondents (90%) fitting in the '20-29' or '30-39' age group.

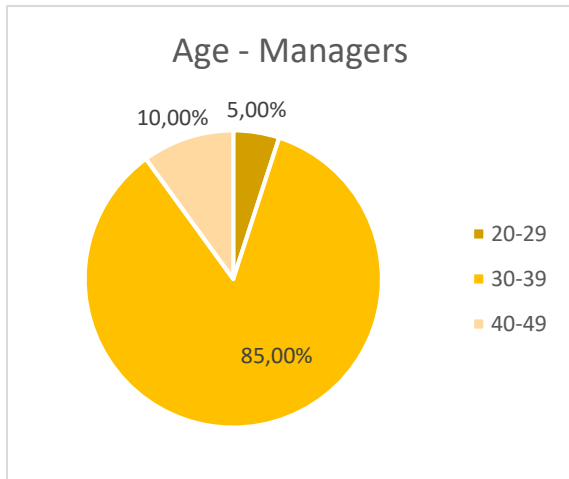


Figure 15: Age - Managers

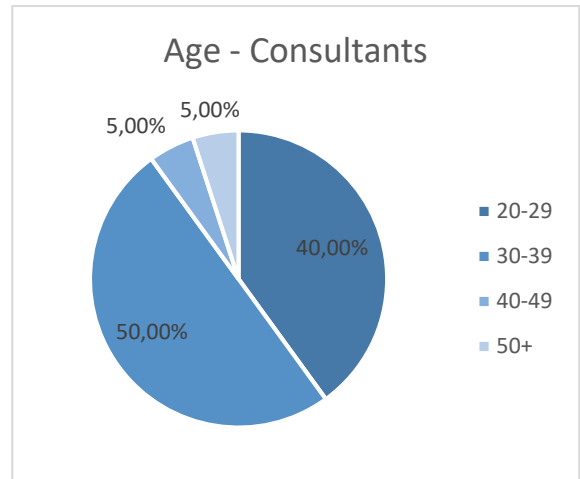


Figure 16: Age - Consultants

Lastly, the following distribution in regards to the several different business lines can be made. Even though there have been efforts to attain an as diverse group of respondents as possible, in both cases the business line Engineering is present in a high volume.

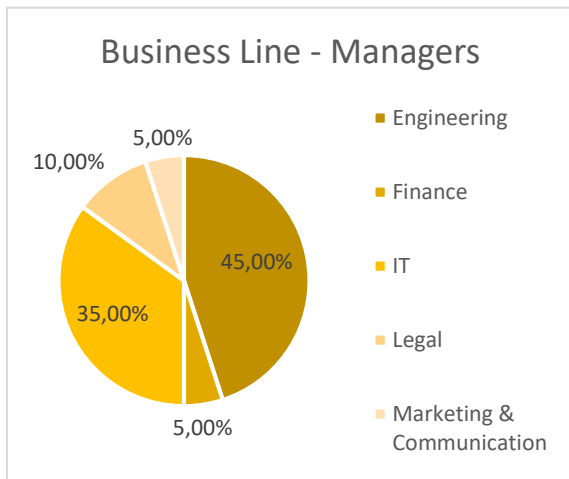


Figure 18: Business Line - Managers

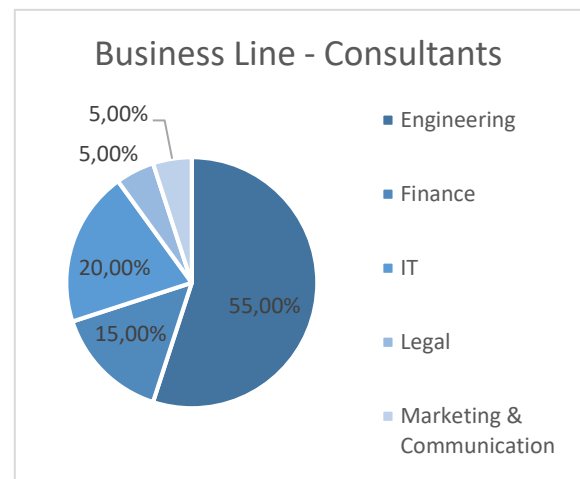


Figure 17: Business Line - Consultants

5.2.3 AHP Analysis

After analysing the tenure, gender, age and business line of the entire selection of respondents and their respective groups of managers and consultants, the dataset consisting of the answers which were given in regards to the surveys were studied using the aforementioned Analytical Hierarchy Process. A summary of this analysis of this data is found in the next section.

5.3 AHP Analysis

This paragraph presents the analysis of the results of the survey which has been conducted under both the group of managers and consultants. By utilizing the Analytical Hierarchy Process, the five aforementioned criteria and underlying sub criteria are compared via pairwise-comparison.

First, the consolidated (or stabilized) results for the five individual main criteria will be presented, this will be discussed in the aforementioned order;

1. Fitness/Suitability of background;
2. The facilitating and motivating of employees;
3. Receiving the adequate amount of coaching and guidance;
4. Possessing the right competencies and mind-set;
5. Having a focus on learning.

For each *main criterion*, the differences and similarities between the responses and opinions in regards to the underlying *sub criteria* of the groups of managers and consultants are noted and discussed. This makes it possible to ascertain- and rank the most/least important factor in regards to the specific main criteria.

Following this, a comparison is made by comparing the five different *main criteria* to each other by pairwise-comparison. This makes it possible to ascertain- and rank the most/least important factor (or criteria) to acquire success as a consultant. This comparison can be found in the next paragraph, chapter '5.4 AHP Analysis – Main Criteria'.

While examining the results of the AHP analysis, three outcomes regarding the data are crucial. The first important outcome is the calculated *weight* of the criteria. This tells the researcher which criteria is the most- and least important. All weights combined amount to 100%.

The second important outcome is called the *absolute errors* which portrait the mean difference of the weight of the respondent's answers with the calculated weight of the final answers for the specific criteria. For this, there is no maximum regarding the number of these errors in terms of percentage.

The third and final important outcome is the reached *consensus*. This is the ratio regarding the amount of consensus which the respondents have over the collaborative results of the survey. The *Business Performance Management Singapore Group* (Goepel K., 2013) distinguishes three categories for the reached consensus, being;

- Low consensus: 50% to 65%;
- Moderate consensus: 65% to 75%;
- High consensus: 75% to 100%.

Values below 50% indicate that there is practically no consensus within the group and there is a high diversity of judgments. Values in the 80% – 90% range indicate a high overlap of priorities and excellent agreement of judgments from the group members.

A final note is that consensus has to be strictly distinguished from consistency. The results which are given by the AHP analysis are reliable and consistent, the given consensus primarily indicates whether or not the respondents share the same average opinion/answer and to which degree.

More background information regarding the consensus of the results of the Analytical Hierarchy Process can be found in the appendix under 'Appendix 4: AHP Group Consensus Indicator'.

5.3.1 Fitness/Suitability of background

When it comes to the fitness or suitability of the background of consultants, four underlying factors weigh in regarding the hierarchy as depicted below, being:

- The highest level of completed education of consultants;
- The age of consultants;
- The gender of consultants;
- The previous work experience of consultants (in total years).

The group of managers has a moderate but bordering on fairly high consensus, the group of consultants have less consensus, low but bordering on moderate.

The fact that the group of managers and consultants both amount to the same hierarchy, and with only slightly different weights, is remarkable. Work experience is deemed the most important aspect in the fitness or suitability of the background of consultants by a long shot. There does seem to be a high level of absolute errors for both groups of respondents, particularly at this highest scored criteria. Following this, the lowest scored weight is the gender of consultants. Both groups of respondents also (more or less) agree on the percentage, just under 10%. Additionally, consultants seem to rate the importance of age significantly lower than managers do. Lastly, there is a high number of absolute errors coming from the group of managers in regards to the criterion 'education'.

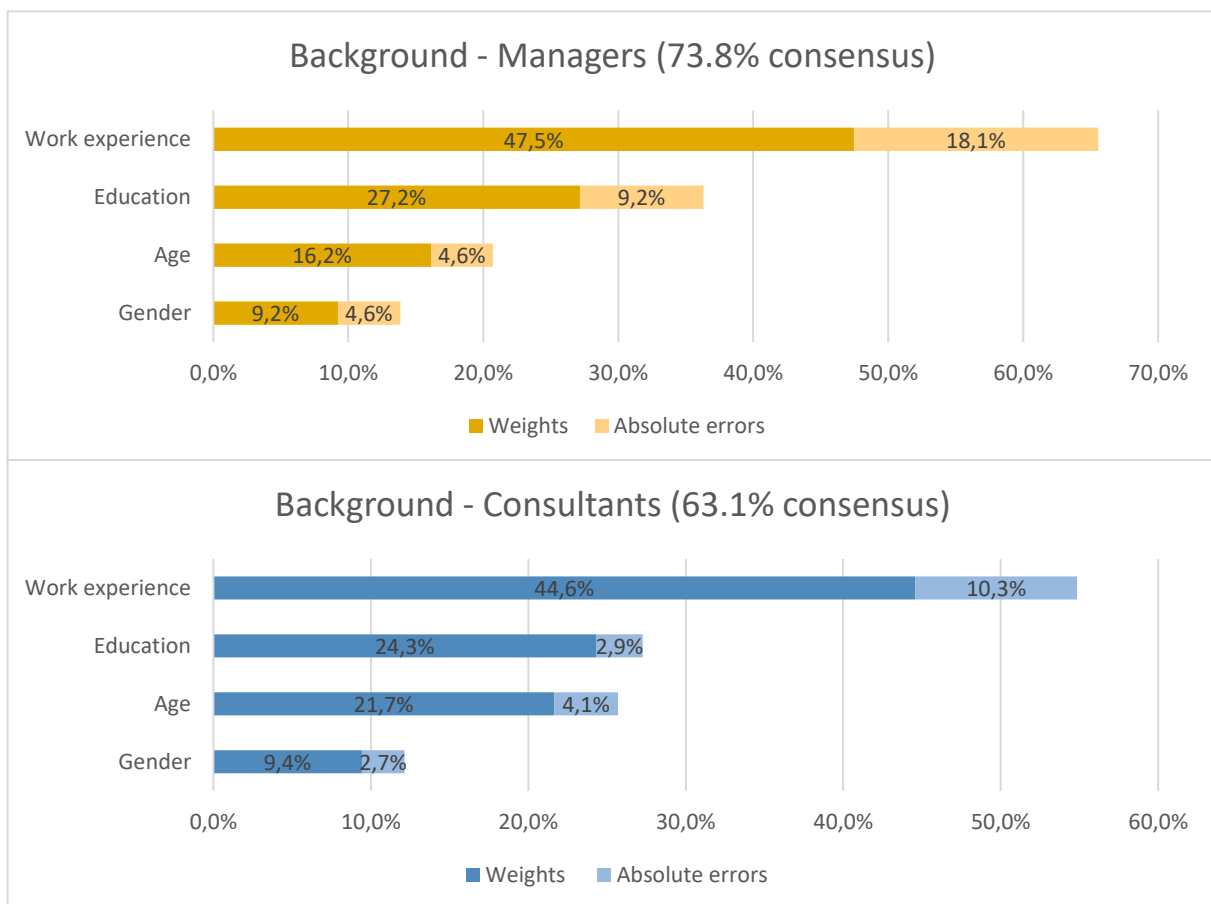


Figure 19: Background - Managers/Consultants

5.3.2 The facilitating and motivating of employees

When it comes to the facilitating and motivating of employees, six underlying factors weigh in regarding the hierarchy as depicted below, being:

- The primary benefits/rewards of consultants (salary);
- The (possibility of) personal development of consultants in terms of positions, personal growth and salary;
- Having realistic commercial targets/expectations to work towards as a consultant;
- The portfolio of clients which a consultant receives;
- The atmosphere within the team which the consultant joins;
- Having a clearly defined commercial scope/focus as a consultant when joining the organization.

The group of managers has a moderate consensus whereas the group of consultants have almost no consensus (but bordering on low).

To start, both groups have selected the team atmosphere as the most important factor regarding the facilitating and motivating of employees in order to reach success. Although, the group of managers deem it significantly more important than the group of consultants. Furthermore, the two groups agree on the two least important factors as well; the clearly defined commercial scope or focus of the consultant and the portfolio of clients which a consultant receives. Personal development is deemed more important from the managers point of view. Lastly, there is a significant difference between the weights of receiving realistic commercial targets/expectations to work towards. Consultants rank this as the second most important factor in becoming successful, as opposed to the fourth place which managers give it (accompanied by a low number of absolute errors).

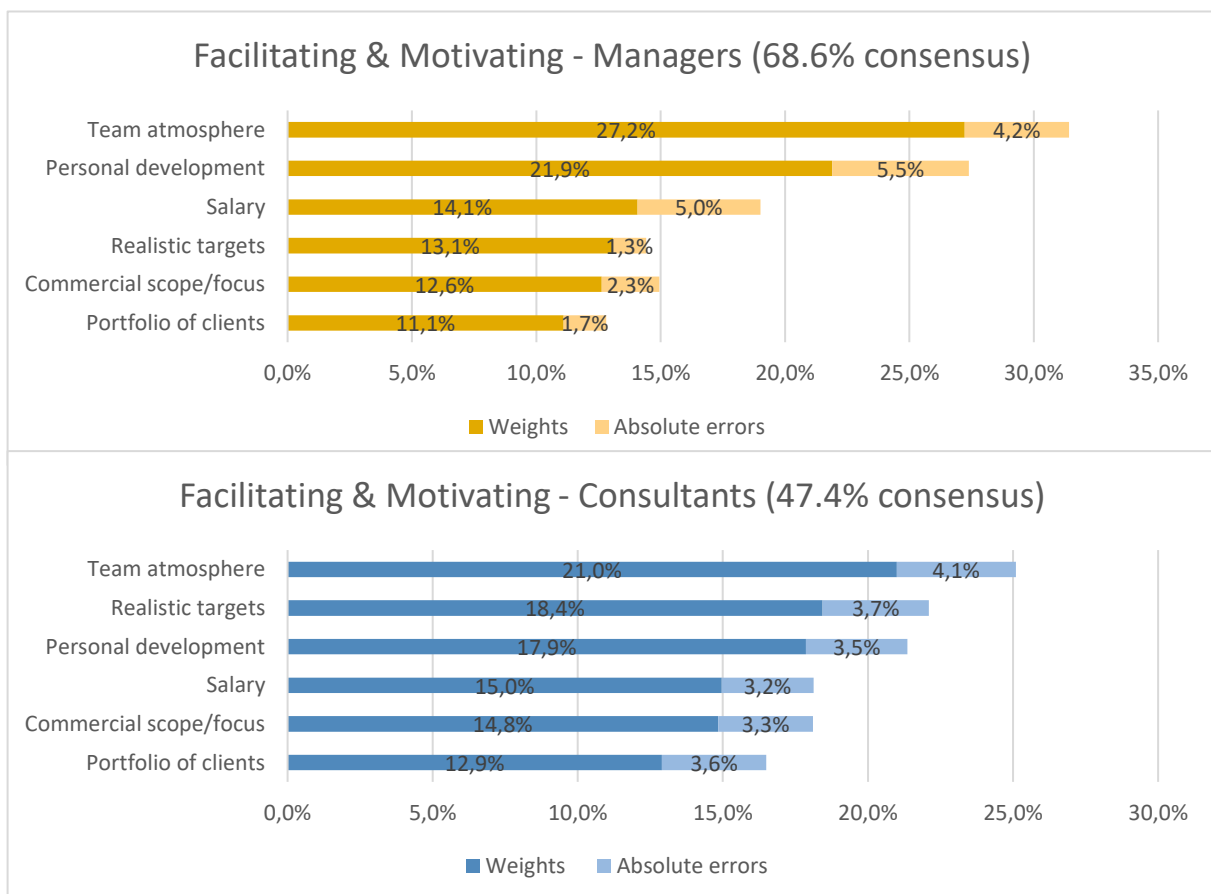


Figure 20: Facilitating & Motivating - Managers/Consultants

5.3.3 Receiving the adequate amount of coaching and guidance

When it comes to receiving the adequate amount of coaching and guidance, five underlying factors weigh in regarding the hierarchy as depicted below, being:

- Being coached and supervised as a consultant by a senior colleague;
- The introduction(period) and guidance which consultants receive when joining the organization;
- Having a competent manager/supervisor as a consultant;
- The level of experience of the team which consultants join;
- Receiving clear guidelines and set rules in regards to day-to-day activities as a consultant.

Both groups have low-to-moderate consensus but bordering on the latter.

The two groups disagree regarding the most important factor in terms of the coaching and guidance of consultants. The difference is not deemed huge, but managers select a competent managers/supervisor as the most important factor whereas consultants select the a clearly defined introduction(period) and guidance which they receive when they first join the organization. The level of experience of the team which consultants join is clearly not important for both groups. Lastly, being coached and supervised by a senior colleague is scored higher by the group of consultants than the group of managers. However, for this particular criterion, the group of consultants have a high number of absolute errors, meaning that this could be (in theory) scored even higher. The same goes for the weight which the managers give towards their highest scoring factor, having a competent manager/supervisor.

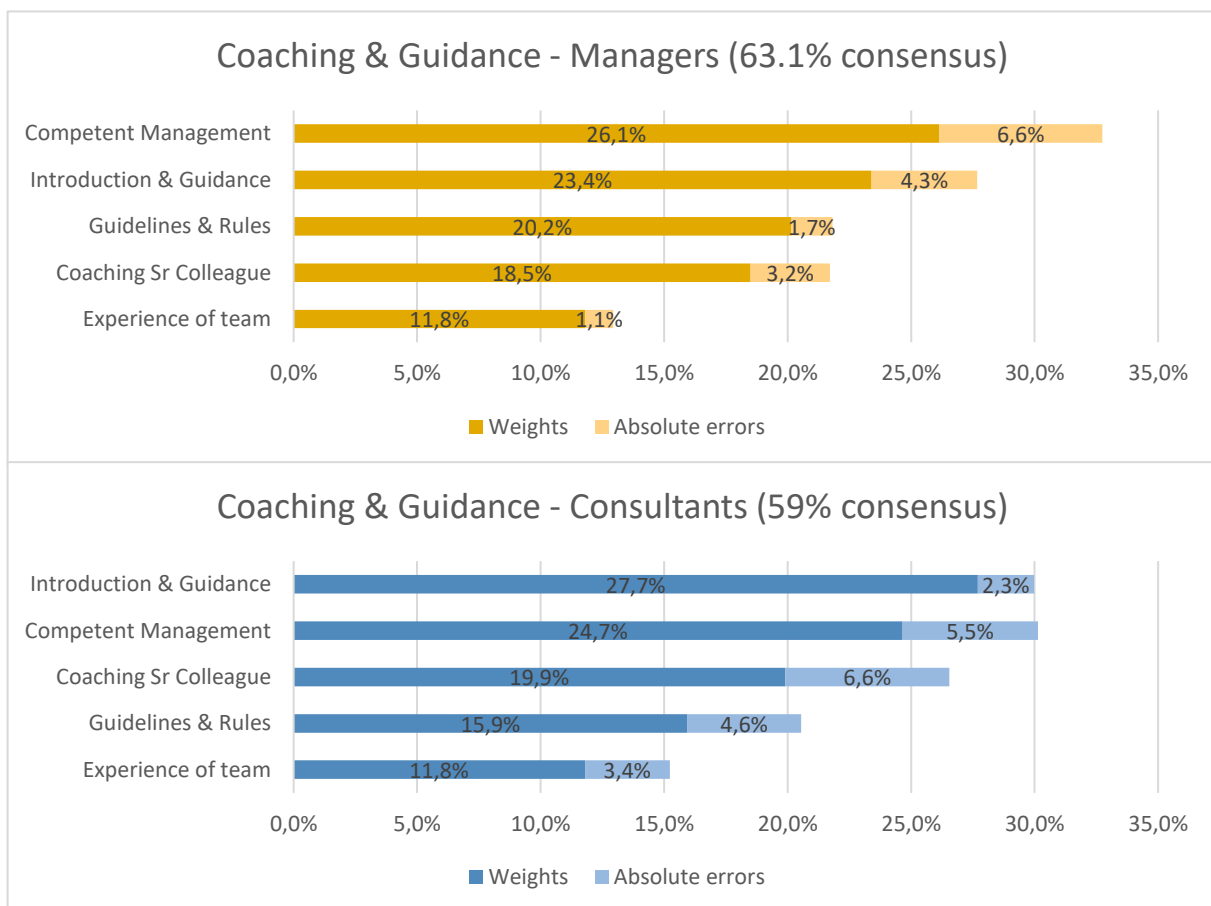


Figure 21: Coaching & Guidance - Managers/Consultants

5.3.4 Possessing the right competencies and mind-set

When it comes to possessing the right competencies and mind-set, seven underlying factors weigh in regarding the hierarchy as depicted below, being:

- Having a result orientated attitude;
- Having strong communicational skills;
- Having ambition;
- Having confidence, guts and/or courage;
- Having affinity with-/interest in the staffing sector;
- Having determination;
- Having an entrepreneurial attitude.

The group of managers have a moderate consensus as opposed to the group of consultants which is significantly lower but still low-to-moderate.

The first remarkable observation is the fact that both groups score the same two factors as the number one and number two in terms of importance in regards to possessing the right competency and mind-set as a consultant. Additionally, the two least important factors are also unanimously chosen, being the ambition of consultants and, at an extremely low number of 5 and 6.3%, the affinity/interest of the consultant with- or in the staffing sector in which Brunel operates. The three remaining factors are all relatively close to each other as well, apart from the 'communicational skills' factor from the group of managers which leaves a gap to their other two factors (being entrepreneurial and result orientated).

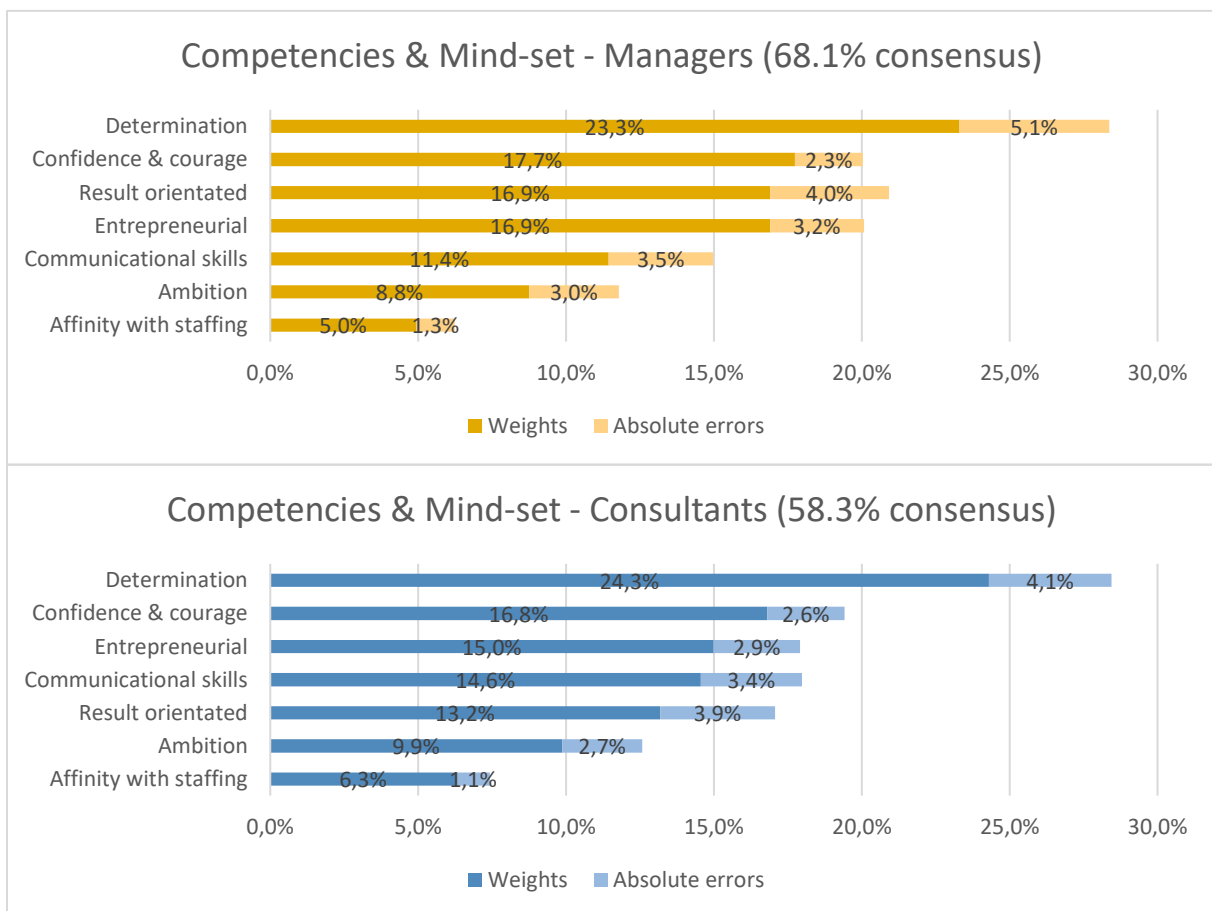


Figure 22: Competencies & Mind-set - Managers/Consultants

5.3.5 Having a focus on learning

When it comes to having a focus on learning, seven underlying factors weigh in regarding the hierarchy as depicted below, being:

- Being enabled and encouraged in learning and exploration of new ways/opportunities;
- Being enabled and encouraged to specialize yourself in a specific field/niche;
- Being able to learn from- and adapt yourself to new situations;
- Being resilient and having experience with-/know how to cope with failure/setbacks;
- Being able to reflect on prior performance and learn from this;
- Having a learning strategy as an individual;
- Having a learning culture as an organization.

Both the group of managers and the group of consultants have somewhat moderate consensus, albeit that the response from the side of the group of consultants is on the low end.

The low numbers of the absolute errors from both sides are remarkable, with some numbers even going below 1%. There are some similarities regarding the two most important factors in terms of the focus which consultants can have on learning, both groups have selected the ‘resilience & knowing how to deal with failures’ and the ‘adaptability’ of consultants as the two most important factors, both with a different factor as their number one weight. Following this, most of the other factors are relatively close in terms of weight. It is remarkable that the two factors ‘exploration’ (once) and ‘organizational learning strategy’ (twice) are scored significantly lower than the other factors.

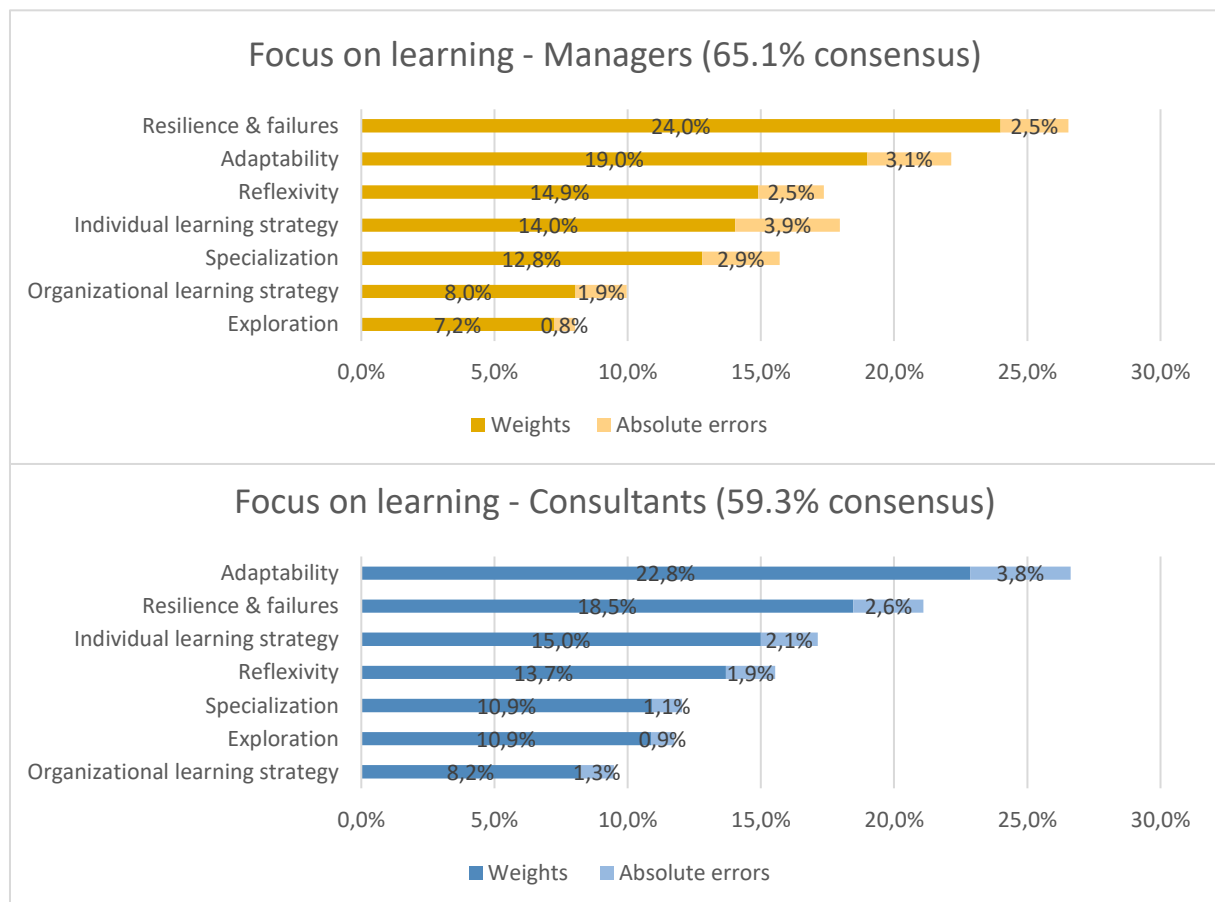


Figure 23: Focus on learning - Managers/Consultants

5.4 AHP Analysis – Main Criteria

Finally, a final comparison was made by comparing the five different main criteria to each other. This makes it possible to ascertain- and rank the most/least important factors (or criteria) to acquire success as a consultant. The five main criteria which have an effect on the acquired success of a consultant are:

1. Fitness/Suitability of background;
2. The facilitating and motivating of employees;
3. Receiving the adequate amount of coaching and guidance;
4. Possessing the right competencies and mind-set;
5. Having a focus on learning.

First of all, we can note that the group of managers has a high consensus as opposed to the group of consultants, which have a low-to-moderate consensus.

It can be concluded that for both groups, possessing the right competencies and mind-set as a consultant is the most important factor in becoming successful by a longshot. For the group of managers, this is established by a huge lead as opposed to the other four factors and although there is a relative high number of absolute errors, the difference (28%) is clear. The decision of the group of consultants is more diverse but there is also a clear winner here in terms of weight. It must also be stated that the background of a consultant (its experience, gender, age and education) seems to be almost negligible for both groups. 'Coaching & Guidance' and 'Facilitating & Motivating' lie really close to each other in terms of importance for both groups, one group favouring the coaching and guidance over another and vice versa.

It must also be noted that, for both groups, the learning aspect scores as the second least important factor in order for a consultant to become successful. The absolute errors for this are low, meaning that the mean average weight of the answers doesn't differ that much with the final results which are given below. However, this does not necessarily mean that learning is not antecedent to success and will not be able to answer how learning can be leveraged in order to improve the tenure of consultants.

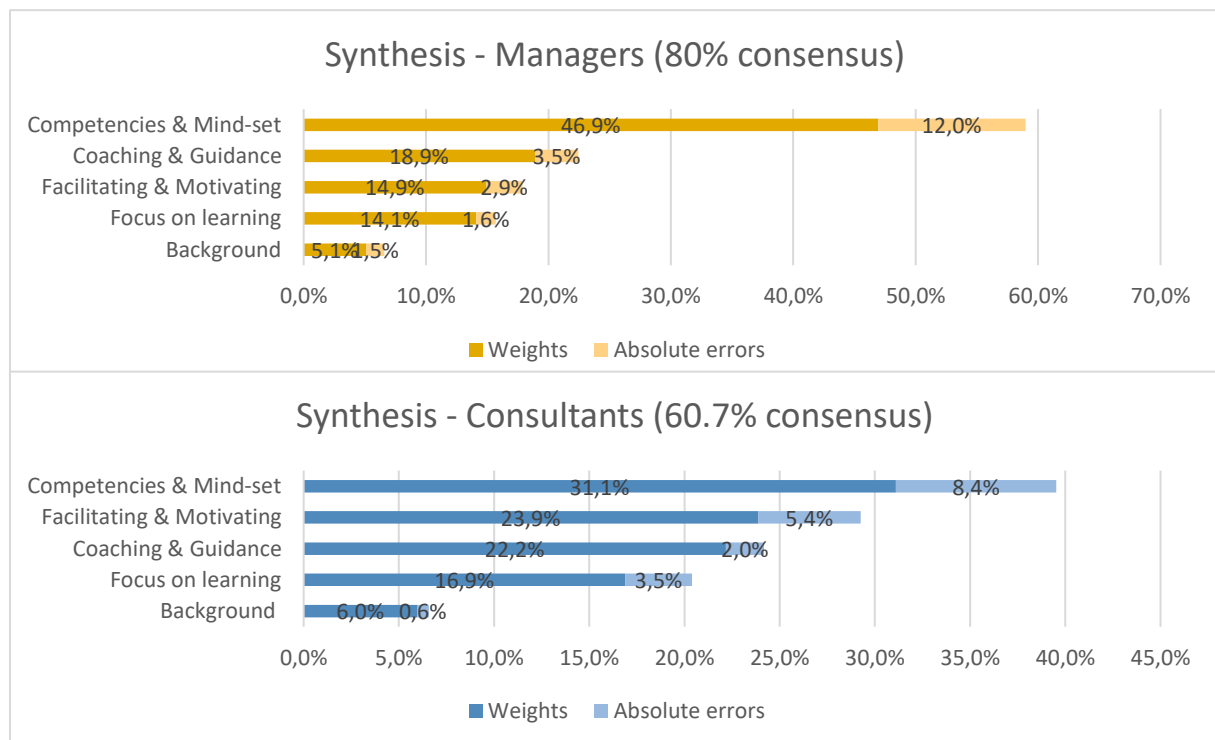


Figure 24: Synthesis - Managers/Consultants

5.4.1 Summary

To reach a more in-depth analysis of the Analytical Hierarchy Process, and to verify the results which are discussed up till this point, a further analysis was undertaken. This process, and the accompanying results, are discussed in the next section.

5.5 Further Analysis (AHP)

To conclude our analysis of the AHP, the weights of the final synthesis of the AHP (the previous paragraph, '5.4 AHP Analysis – Main Criteria') are multiplied by the original weights of their initial hierarchy from their respective criteria (the entirety of section '5.3 AHP Analysis').

An example of the calculation is as follows; for the first criteria of the group of managers (Fitness/Suitability of background), work experience scores the first place in the weight hierarchy with 47.5% out of 100%. When this is multiplied with the final weight of the synthesis of all the criteria (5.1% out of the 100%), this results in a score of 2,42 ranking it on the 15th place out of the total of 29 sub criteria.

The results of this calculation for the group of *managers* are listed in the following paragraph and table, the results of this calculation for the group of *consultants* are listed in the paragraph after that. For both of these lists, the hierarchy of the original AHP analysis is listed in the top right corner.

5.5.1 Managers

When examining the final hierarchy of the AHP analysis for the group of managers, it becomes clear that most of the hierarchy stays (more or less) consistent, especially as opposed to the upcoming final hierarchy of the group of consultants. However, there are some remarkable shifts in the hierarchy.

To begin with, most of the sub criteria of the main criterion '*Competencies & Mind-set*' are still the top-rated criteria. However, '*Ambition*' and '*Affinity with staffing*' have dropped regarding the original hierarchy (the latter has dropped considerably).

The sub criteria of the main criterion '*Coaching & Guidance*' have shifted a bit as well. The two factors '*Competent Management*' and '*Introduction & Guidance*' have shifted upwards into the hierarchy where the main criterion '*Competencies & Mind-set*' originally was. It must also be noted that the experience of the team which consultants join is way behind in regards to the other criteria.

The entirety of the third main criterion, '*Facilitating & Motivating*', has moved downwards in terms of hierarchy. At the bottom are the '*Portfolio of clients*', the '*Commercial scope/focus*' and the fact if consultants are given realistic targets when they join the organization. The atmosphere of the team has risen in terms of hierarchy where it has surpassed three sub criteria of the second most important main criterion and even one sub criterion of the most important main criterion.

The fourth main criterion, whether or not consultants have a *focus on learning*, is spread out across the entire hierarchy. Even though it has been voted the second least important main criterion, the resilience and having experience with-/know how to cope with failure/setbacks is almost positioned in the top 10 in terms of hierarchy. Adaptability also scores high in regards to the voted importance of its criteria. Lastly, the criteria '*Exploration*' and '*Organizational Learning Strategy*' are almost voted to the lowest hierarchy possible.

Closing the list are the criteria in regards to the *fitness and suitability* of the background of the consultants. Most of the four sub criteria remain at the lowest end of the hierarchy. However, the amount of work experience which consultants have is weighed halfway up the final hierarchy.

Managers						
Ranking	Criteria	Sub Criteria	Weight	Weight x Synthesis Weight		AHP Hierarchy
1	Competencies & Mind-set	Determination	23,3%	10,93		1. Competencies & Mind-set
2	Competencies & Mind-set	Confidence & courage	17,7%	8,32		2. Coaching & Guidance
3	Competencies & Mind-set	Result orientated	16,9%	7,93		3. Facilitating & Motivating
4	Competencies & Mind-set	Entrepreneurial	16,9%	7,93		4. Focus on learning
5	Competencies & Mind-set	Communicational skills	11,4%	5,37		5. Background
6	Coaching & Guidance	Competent Management	26,1%	4,94		
7	Coaching & Guidance	Introduction & Guidance	23,4%	4,42		
8	Competencies & Mind-set	Ambition	8,8%	4,11		
9	Facilitating & Motivating	Team atmosphere	27,2%	4,06		
10	Coaching & Guidance	Guidelines & Rules	20,2%	3,81		
11	Coaching & Guidance	Coaching Sr Colleague	18,5%	3,50		
12	Focus on learning	Resilience & failures	24,0%	3,38		
13	Facilitating & Motivating	Personal development	21,9%	3,26		
14	Focus on learning	Adaptability	19,0%	2,68		
15	Background	Work experience	47,5%	2,42		
16	Competencies & Mind-set	Affinity with staffing	5,0%	2,32		
17	Coaching & Guidance	Experience of team	11,8%	2,23		
18	Focus on learning	Reflexivity	14,9%	2,10		
19	Facilitating & Motivating	Salary	14,1%	2,10		
20	Focus on learning	Individual learning strategy	14,0%	1,98		
21	Facilitating & Motivating	Realistic targets	13,1%	1,95		
22	Facilitating & Motivating	Commercial scope/focus	12,6%	1,88		
23	Focus on learning	Specialization	12,8%	1,80		
24	Facilitating & Motivating	Portfolio of clients	11,1%	1,65		
25	Background	Education	27,2%	1,39		
26	Focus on learning	Organizational learning strategy	8,0%	1,13		
27	Focus on learning	Exploration	7,2%	1,02		
28	Background	Age	16,2%	0,82		
29	Background	Gender	9,2%	0,47		

Figure 25: Final AHP Hierarchy - Managers

5.5.2 Consultants

When we examine the final hierarchy of the AHP analysis for the group of consultants, it appears that the list is less consistent than the final hierarchy list for the group of managers. Also, as with the final comparison of the five main criteria in the previous section, the AHP hierarchy of the definitive analysis as shown below differs from the group of managers. Meaning, the original number two and number three criteria are reversed, this is seen in the top-right corner.

Starting with the highest ranked main criterion, the 'Competencies & Mind-set', it can be noted that most of the sub criteria of this main criterion still score high weights. However, comparing with the group of managers, the spread is much more noticeable. The number one sub criterion in the hierarchy list is still unchanged, the rest of the sub criteria have shifted somewhat towards the position of the second and third main criterion. The most noticeable changes are two sub criteria, the ambition of consultants (dropping to the 18th spot on the hierarchy) and the affinity with-/interest in the staffing sector of consultants which has dropped to a very noticeable 23rd place in the hierarchy, almost in the last one fifth of the list.

The second main criterion, 'Facilitating & Motivating', is also spread out over the hierarchy, although not so much as the first main criterion. It can be noted that the sub criterion 'Team atmosphere' has moved up towards the original spot of the most important criteria and that the portfolio of clients which a consultant receives is deemed less important than originally stated due to its lower spot (17/29) than before.

The third main criterion, 'Coaching & Guidance', has seen some remarkable changes. The most obvious one is the fact that two of its sub criteria have moved into the top three in regards to the hierarchy. Both the introduction and guidance which a consultant receives in its first period and whether or not someone has been appointed a competent manager/supervisor is deemed crucial in obtaining success as a consultant. The rest of the sub criteria are more spread out. However, we do want to make special notice of the sub

criteria ‘Experience of team’ which has scored way lower in the hierarchy than in the original analysis of the AHP.

The second to last main criterion, the *focus which consultants have on learning*, is largely unchanged in regards to the original hierarchy. However, we see that the sub criterion ‘Adaptability’ is noticeably higher than the other sub criteria, almost moving into the top 10 in terms of weight and importance. Also, the least important variable for this fourth main criterion, whether or not the organization has a learning culture, has dropped even further into the bottom of the hierarchy.

Consultants						
Ranking	Criteria	Sub Criteria	Weight	Weight x Synthesis Weight		AHP Hierarchy
1	Competencies & Mind-set	Determination	24,3%	7,56		1. Competencies & Mind-set
2	Coaching & Guidance	Introduction & Guidance	27,7%	6,15		2. Facilitating & Motivating
3	Coaching & Guidance	Competent Management	24,7%	5,47		3. Coaching & Guidance
4	Competencies & Mind-set	Confidence & courage	16,8%	5,23		4. Focus on learning
5	Facilitating & Motivating	Team atmosphere	21,0%	5,02		5. Background
6	Competencies & Mind-set	Entrepreneurial	15,0%	4,66		
7	Competencies & Mind-set	Communicational skills	14,6%	4,53		
8	Coaching & Guidance	Coaching Sr Colleague	19,9%	4,42		
9	Facilitating & Motivating	Realistic targets	18,4%	4,41		
10	Facilitating & Motivating	Personal development	17,9%	4,27		
11	Competencies & Mind-set	Result orientated	13,2%	4,10		
12	Focus on learning	Adaptability	22,8%	3,86		
13	Facilitating & Motivating	Salary	15,0%	3,58		
14	Facilitating & Motivating	Commercial scope/focus	14,8%	3,55		
15	Coaching & Guidance	Guidelines & Rules	15,9%	3,54		
16	Focus on learning	Resilience & failures	18,5%	3,12		
17	Facilitating & Motivating	Portfolio of clients	12,9%	3,08		
18	Competencies & Mind-set	Ambition	9,9%	3,07		
19	Background	Work experience	44,6%	2,68		
20	Coaching & Guidance	Experience of team	11,8%	2,62		
21	Focus on learning	Individual learning strategy	15,0%	2,53		
22	Focus on learning	Reflexivity	13,7%	2,31		
23	Competencies & Mind-set	Affinity with staffing	6,3%	1,96		
24	Focus on learning	Specialization	10,9%	1,84		
25	Focus on learning	Exploration	10,9%	1,84		
26	Background	Education	24,3%	1,46		
27	Focus on learning	Organizational learning strategy	8,2%	1,39		
28	Background	Age	21,7%	1,30		
29	Background	Gender	9,4%	0,57		

Figure 26: Final AHP Hierarchy - Consultants

Lastly, the sub criteria of the fifth main criterion (*‘Fitness/Suitability of background’*) have remained mostly at the bottom of the hierarchy. However, we do see a huge gap in regards to the sub criteria of work experience of the consultants which has taken the 19th spot in the hierarchy. The gap between these sub criteria is less noticeable than with the group of managers (where it took the 15th spot) but it is a significant difference nonetheless.

5.5.3 ANOVA Analysis

In closing, an Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was undertaken to compare the means of the two researched groups. This comparison was necessary to determine if there were any significant statistical differences present or that this could be accounted for by a margin of error.

Here, the two most important main criteria were subjected to the ANOVA analysis; the *focus on learning* (as part of the main research question) and the *competencies & mind-set* (due to it being identified as the most important main research criteria by the Analytical Hierarchy Process). The data which was needed for the ANOVA analysis was comprised from the previous sections of this chapter, ‘5.5 Further Analysis (AHP)’. The ANOVA analysis was conducted by utilizing the *Data Analysis* add-in of *Microsoft Excel*.

Starting with the results from the main criteria *focus on learning*, the first conclusion that can be drawn is the fact that both means of the two groups are relatively close to each other, 2.0 for the group of managers and 2.4 for the group of consultants (out of a total range of roughly 1.0-3.9). This does mean that the sample means are different.

Next, while looking at the F value as compared to the critical F value, we see that the F value does not exceed the critical F value by a huge margin (0.79 (F) as opposed to 4.75 (Crit. F)). Therefore, the results may *not* be interpreted as a statistically significant difference among the means of the group, meaning; the differences we see in our samples might be the result of random sampling error. The *p*-value ($p = .39$) adds to this by far exceeding the significance level of .05.

The results from the second main criteria, the *competencies & mind-set* of an individual, provide us with interesting results as well. When we start with the means of both groups, we can conclude a 6.7 for the group of managers and a 4.4 for the group of consultants (with a total range of roughly 2.0-10.9). Meaning, here, the sample means are different as well, even more so than with the first main research criteria.

Next, the results of the comparison of the F value as opposed to the critical F value was analysed. Even though, just as with the *focus on learning*, the F value does not exceed the critical F value, the difference between the two values is substantially less (3.1 (F) as opposed to 4.75 (Crit. F)). Even though the results may *not* be interpreted as a statistically significant difference among the means of the group, the amount of random sampling error is expected to be a lot less here. The *p*-value ($p = .10$) which is also substantially lower, adds to this statement.

5.5.4 Summary

As discussed in section '5.4 AHP Analysis – Main Criteria', It can be concluded that for both groups of respondents, possessing the right competencies and mind-set as a consultant is seen as the most important factor in becoming successful. After the further analysis that was described in this section, this conclusion was upheld by the more in-depth analysis which was done for both groups of respondents, even though an amount of random sampling error was found to be present.

Following this, a last data analysis was initiated to compare the results for this criterion (the competencies & mind-set) with the organizational context and reality of the organization. This comparison was achieved by pairing the research results of the previous paragraphs with available data from Brunel. This final comparison can be found in the following section.

Additionally, the decision was made to forsake a closer comparison regarding the criterion 'focus on learning', which is closely tied to the main research question, due to the low score of the final AHP hierarchy.

5.6 Comparison - Competencies & Mind-set at Brunel

As indicated in the third chapter, covering the day-to-day context and management at Brunel, the organization has replaced the Big Five Personality Test with the HFM Talentindex at the end of 2018. Both of these types of tests are utilized in the same manner.

The tests are used in the selection process of new consultants and are administered after an individual had his/her first interview at the organization. Next, the test results are discussed in a second interview (under the notion that both parties were still interested in continuing the selection-/application process). If the applicant scores average or above average test scores, the selection process is almost always continued. A below average test score has been reason to reject or stop the selection process for specific candidates in the past (but is not always the case in regards to the specific motivation and/or explanation which are brought up from the candidate's side).

The HFM Talentindex measures four factors; Intelligence, Personality, Motivation/Preferred roles/Interests and the Learning Agility of an individual. For this specific analysis regarding the results of the AHP in regards to the competencies & mind-set of consultants, the '*personality*' aspect of the HFM Talentindex is used.

The part of the HFM Talentindex which measures personality does so by subjecting an individual to questions in order to determine their mastery regarding 44 individual competencies which the organization has identified. For each competency, four or five different questions are administered, totalling a staggering amount of 200 in total. Each question is administered utilizing a 1-9 scale on which the individuals are supposed to score themselves. The 1-9 scale is developed using the normal distribution so that the middle point of the scale (5) represents the test score of the average working population in The Netherlands. Most results are within the 4-6 range.

Although all competencies are included in the test, organizations (such as Brunel) usually identify 8-10 key competencies. These key competencies are researched in the same way but are (as selected by the organization) deemed the most crucial in ascertaining someone's fit for a specific position within the organization. For the role of consultant, Brunel has chosen ten key competencies, being;

- Performing under pressure;
- Result driven;
- Social/Communicational skills;
- Being orientated towards the client;
- Commercial drive;
- Flexibility;
- Personal development;
- Negotiation;
- Convincing;
- Researching motivation.

For the purpose of comparing and benchmarking the AHP, the test results of 35 individual consultants were obtained. All of these consultants were, at some point, hired by Brunel during the last two years. On average, and with all their test scores combined, the hired consultants at Brunel score 5.6% higher on an individual competency than the average baseline (baseline; 5, Brunel; 5,28) in terms of the total competencies (44). However, the main question is, which specific competencies are scored high? And, are these the preferred ones of the organization?

Before starting the final comparison, the seven criteria of the 'competencies & mind-set' which were identified and researched via the AHP method had to be paired with one of the 44 competencies as identified by the HFM Talentindex and had to be translated from Dutch to English. The end result of this process is seen below:

AHP: Having a result orientated attitude	HFM: Result driven
AHP: Having strong communicational skills	HFM: Social/Communicational skills
AHP: Having ambition	HFM: Commercial drive
AHP: Having confidence, guts and/or courage	HFM: Assertiveness
AHP: Having affinity with-/interest in the staffing sector	HFM: Focus on market
AHP: Having determination	HFM: Drive
AHP: Having an entrepreneurial attitude	HFM: Entrepreneurship

Figure 27: Pairing of AHP criteria & HFM competencies

Taking all of the data from the earlier analyses and the previous information regarding the HFM Talentindex into account, three aspects were researched:

1. The most important phenomenon to be researched was; how do the seven factors of the 'Competencies & Mind-set' as identified in the AHP, score in relation to the data which Brunel has gathered using the HFM Talentindex?

Firstly however, two additional questions had to be answered, being;

2. What were (on average) the top 5 best- and top 5 worst scoring competencies of the hired consultants?
3. And, how did the hired consultants score on the ten key competencies which Brunel has identified?

The answers to the three aspects which are named above are depicted in the following three paragraphs.

5.6.1 Top 5 Best/Worst Competencies

The following five competencies scored (on average) the highest test scores measured over all of the individual tests:

1. Researching motivation (+9.3%);
1. Organizational Sensitivity (+9.3%);
3. Social/Communicational skills (+8.2%);
3. Being orientated towards the client (+8.2%);
5. Sensitivity (+7.7%).

After each competency, a number is given. This number indicates the percentage of which the average score of all the 35 combined individual test results of this competency is above the average overall score (5,28, as indicated).

As can be seen, there is a shared first and third place for two competencies. It should also be noted that the competency 'Social/Communicational skills', which scores a shared third place here in terms of overall average score out of the HFM test, is also listed in the list of seven factors of the AHP's 'Competencies & Mind-set'. However, due to the fact that, in the original hierarchy of the AHP, the group of managers listed it as the fifth most important- and the group of consultants as the fourth most important in the hierarchy, no real proof/effect is recognized in the comparison between the AHP- and the HFM scores.

The following five competencies scored (on average) the lowest test scores measured over all of the individual tests:

1. Analysing & Judgment (-15.6%);
2. Structuring (-10.2%);
3. Sensitivity regarding surroundings (-9.6%);
4. Helicopter view (-9.1%);
5. Adaptability (-7.5%).

The most important aspect to notice is the low score on the 'Analysing & Judgment' competency which is substantially lower than the other competencies. This also applies when it's compared with the top 5 best competencies where we notice a shared first place at 9.3% difference as opposed to the average score. Here, at the lowest scored competencies, the -15.6% stands out in a big way.

Besides the previous statement, no further proof/effect is recognized in the comparison between the AHP- and the HFM scores.

5.6.2 Ten Key Competencies of Brunel

As discussed, Brunel has chosen ten key competencies for the role of consultant. The average scores on the HFM test of hired consultants is given below:

1. Researching motivation (+9.3%);
2. Social/Communicational skills (+8.2%);
3. Commercial drive (+5.5%);
4. Negotiation (+3.9%);
5. Personal development (+1.7%);
6. Convincing (-0.4%);
7. Result driven (-1.5%);
8. Being orientated towards the client (-1.5%);
9. Flexibility (-3.1%);
10. Performing under pressure (-3.7%).

As we can see, the scores of the consultants are spread out evenly. On the one hand, Brunel has successfully hired consultants which score above average (again, baseline; 5, Brunel; 5,28) on five different competencies, being; researching motivation, social/communicational skills, commercial drive, negotiation and personal development. Additionally, two of the high scoring key competencies as identified by Brunel are linkable to the results of the AHP analysis, being; 'social/communicational skills' and 'commercial drive' (as will be discussed in the next section, '5.6.3 AHP vs. HFM'). However, due to the fact that both researched groups scored these two factors relatively low in terms of hierarchy (managers; 5/7 and 6/7, consultants; 4/7 and 6/7), no real significant further proof/effect is recognized in the comparison between the AHP- and the HFM scores.

Additionally, there are also a few observations to make regarding the lower end of the list of the ten key competencies as identified by Brunel. The first observation is the most obvious fact, out of the 35 consultants which have been hired, the average scores on half of the key competencies are below average. This means that the organization hires consultants which (again, on average) score sub-par on important competencies/skills which have been identified by the organization. Seeing that the HFM is administered in-between the first and second interview with potential consultants, Brunel is either; purposely hiring consultants which score below par on their key competencies (effectively ignoring these test scores), potential consultants give a grounded reason/motivation as to why they score below par on the key competencies in the second/third interview and are given the benefit of the doubt or the organization is not aware that the scores of their hired consultants are (on average) below par for half of their key competencies.

To make matters worse, the competency 'result driven', is scored moderately to fairly high in the AHP hierarchy (managers; 3/7 and consultants; 5/7). The fact that both groups have identified this factor to be important in becoming successful as a consultant combined with the fact that the average test scores of this competency of hired consultants are below average is something for Brunel to be worried about. As opposed to the analyses in the previous chapters, this observation is worth investigating further due to the high score on the AHP and the low reality of the test scores on the HFM test.

5.6.3 AHP vs. HFM

Lastly, the most important comparison, the test scores of the HFM were compared with the final hierarchy results of the AHP test regarding the criteria 'Competencies & Mind-set'. The comparison is listed below:

1. Social/Communicational skills (+8.2%);
2. Commercial drive (+5.5%);
3. Assertiveness (+2.8%);
4. Drive (+2.3%);
5. Result driven (-1.5%);
6. Entrepreneurship (-2.6%);
7. Focus on market (-3.1%).

Starting from the top, the highest scoring competency from the HFM test is 'Social/Communicational skills'. When comparing all of the HFM scores, this means that consultants are on average 8.2% more proficient in this competency than the set norm. When we compare this with the analysed hierarchy from the AHP (Managers; 5/7 and Consultants; 4/7) there is a clear difference in the hired consultants versus the preferred consultants as indicated by the two researched groups. In other words, Brunel primarily selects consultants with developed social- and communicational skills while they should prioritise other competencies. However, developed social/communicational skills are of course, in essence, not a bad thing to have for consultants.

The next competency, the commercial drive of consultants, is also scored fairly high in the HFM test with an average score of +5.5%. Compared to the two researched groups, we note that both gave (in terms of hierarchy) a six out of seven score. This means that, more or less, the same conclusion can be made regarding this comparison between the AHP and the HFM test scores as the previous competency. Being, there is a clear difference in the hired consultants versus the preferred consultants as indicated by the two researched groups. Here, we see that Brunel primarily selects consultants with a clear drive, motivation and ambition (which, on its own, is a positive competency to master) but that this doesn't really match with the need which is outspoken by the group of managers and consultants in relation towards becoming successful as a consultant.

The score on the third highest competency, the assertiveness of consultants, aligns significantly more with the analysis of the AHP hierarchy. First of all, we should note that the assertiveness of hired consultants is 2.8% higher than the average number. Comparing this with the hierarchy scores of the AHP, being 2 out of 7 for both of the researched groups, it can be stated that Brunel is on the right track in terms of selecting new employees regarding the competency of assertiveness.

More or less the same can be said regarding the fourth highest scoring competency, the drive of consultants. Although it is ranked "just" fourth in terms of the highest scoring competency, the scoring is still 2.3% higher than average. When this is paired with the fact that both of the researched groups agree on the matter that this drive (or determination in the AHP analysis) is the number one factor in becoming successful as a consultant (rather convincingly for the group of managers but also for the group of consultants), it becomes clear that Brunel successfully selects its new employees in regards to this competency.

From the fifth competency and on, the average test scores regarding the HFM test start to become negative. The first competency to score a negative average result is 'result driven'. Here we can observe that, on average, consultants score a -1.5%. Regarding the analysis of the AHP hierarchy, the scores are mixed regarding the group of managers indicating a 3/7 and the group of consultants a 6/7 in terms of hierarchy. From the group of consultants, the preference for someone to have a result orientated attitude isn't that high with a total hierarchy score of 11/29. However, the group of managers award it a total hierarchy score of 3 out of 29. Combining the previous data, it becomes clear that Brunel is failing to select new consultants which are result driven (enough).

The second-to-last scoring competency is the entrepreneurship of an individual. The first thing to note is the fact that the average score of hired consultants is 2.6% lower than the norm. Comparing this with the AHP hierarchy analysis, a problem becomes visible. For both the group of managers (4/7 and 4/29) and consultants (3/7 and 6/29), it becomes clear that the entrepreneurial ability of a consultant is rated to be fairly important. Therefore, the conclusion must be made that Brunel fails to select consultants which qualify regarding the test scores for this specific competency.

Lastly, the competency 'focus on market' is covered. This competency has taken the last place in the HFM test score analysis with a score of 3.1% below the average. When compared with the final analysis of the AHP hierarchy, where the group of managers rate it a 7/7 and 19/29 overall and the group of consultants rate it a 7/7 and an even lower 23/39 overall, it becomes clear that selecting new employees which have a good focus on the (staffing/consultancy) market should not be a huge goal- or focus for the organization. This is furthermore coupled with the fact that Brunel has a proven habit of hiring new consultants who perform sub-par as indicated by the -3.1% combined average test score of this competency.

Taking everything that has been stated above into account, it can be concluded that Brunel is on the right track in selecting its new consultants based on the sub criteria for the competencies & mind-set which were identified in this research. Consultants which are hired by the organization score above average scores on four out of the seven identified criteria in regards to the Analytical Hierarchy Process. However, three out of the seven competencies are scored below average. Here, Brunel clearly fails to select the right individuals and improvement is definitely needed.

6. Discussion & Conclusion

6.1 General

This chapter concludes the research that has been performed and analyses its findings. In the first section, the discussion is covered. Here, the key findings and the implications of the results of the research are addressed. Next, the limitations of this research are stated. Following this, the conclusion is presented. Here, a final reflection upon the research is offered and the main research question is answered. The last section covers the recommendations for future research and practical tools/advice is offered for the organization of Brunel.

6.2 Discussion

The importance of an effective management on tenure has been described by many scholars and scientists. The research problem which is present at Brunel has a clear link to this phenomenon, the low tenure of the commercial backbone of the organization (which generates the lion's share of the revenue) has been the number one problem for the organization regarding these last years. With widely known (and proved) consequences like the ineffective transferring of knowledge and information, all the way towards the declining relationships with clients and specialists, a low tenure at an organization will almost always (amongst others) cause a loss of a substantial amount of revenue.

Therefore, the practical aim- and outcome of this research was to provide the organization with the tools and advice (specifically, organizations within the staffing-, secondment or recruitment sector) to be able to create an environment and/or introduce certain aspects within their day-to-day activities which will make it less likely/attractive for employees to leave the organization. Practically speaking, for Brunel as an organization, this meant that the average tenure of its consultants needed to be significantly improved to a number higher than the original number of 2.38 years.

As discussed in this research, two major factors were suspected to contribute to the tenure of consultants at Brunel, being; 1. their *success*, and 2. their *focus on learning*. The main research question was stated as follows: *“To what extent is ‘learning’ antecedent to ‘success’ and how can learning be leveraged by Brunel to improve the tenure of its consultants?.”*

6.2.1 Key Findings

In line with the logical order in which the research has been performed, the first aspect to be researched was the relationship between *success* and *tenure*. After defining the variable of success (and therefore making it measurable), it was found that success does lead to a longer- or increased tenure, based on the researched data regarding the consultants. In short, 95% of consultants which left the organization in an early stage and had an average tenure of 2.34 years were unsuccessful, whereas of the consultants which were successful, the average tenure was 4 to 4.5 years.

After proving the positive effect of success on tenure, and in an effort to improve said tenure, the research continued with the focus on key success factors. Here, five main criteria were stated which were supposed to have a positive effect on the tenure of consultants. One of these main criteria focussed on the earlier discussed *focus on learning*, the other four criteria revolved around; 1. the fitness/suitability of the background, 2. the facilitating and motivating of employees, 3. the receiving of an adequate amount of coaching and guidance and 4. the possession of the right competencies and mind-set.

After utilizing the Analytical Hierarchy Process, two important observations were made. First and foremost, both of the research groups (managers and consultants) deemed the focus on learning relatively unimportant in regards to attaining success as a consultant in comparison with the other four main criteria, placing it (hierarchically) on the fourth place out of five. The second observation revolved around the

winning main criteria, the competencies & mind-set of consultants was unanimously deemed as the number one criterion in attaining success as a consultant, winning by a huge margin.

The further analysis of the Analytical Hierarchy Process confirmed the results which were reported earlier. However, there are some interesting outliers to report, mainly regarding the two earlier named main criteria.

Regarding the focus on learning, 1. being resilient and having experience with-/know how to cope with failure/setbacks and 2. 'adaptability' were deemed significantly more important than the other sub criteria which were identified in relation to the focus on learning. These two criteria also took a fairly high place on the final AHP hierarchy as opposed to their accompanying sub criteria, for the group of managers; 12/29 (Resilience & failures) & 14/29 (Adaptability) and for the group of consultants; 12/29 (Adaptability) & 16/29 (Resilience & failures). Directly referring back to the main research question, by focussing its efforts on these two criteria, Brunel can leverage 'learning' in order to increase the tenure of its consultants.

The other main criteria, the competencies & mind-set of consultants, has interesting outliers as well. Here, 1. the 'ambition' of consultants and 2. the affinity with-/interest in the staffing sector of consultants take a remarkable place in the AHP hierarchy but in a more negative way. The group of managers rank the two criteria an 8/29 (Ambition) and an even lower 16/29 (Affinity with staffing) whereas the group of consultants go even lower than that with an 18/29 (Ambition) and a 23/29 (Affinity with staffing).

Closing the final AHP hierarchy, the data suggests that although some interesting outliers are present, having a focus on learning as a consultant does not have a positive effect on success, and therefore the accompanying tenure. However, the results of the ANOVA analysis need to be taken into account as well. These results indicate that, especially regarding this research variable of 'learning', an amount of random sampling error might be present. Therefore, the result cannot be interpreted as being 100% statistically significant, even though the two means of the researched groups are relatively close to each other.

Regarding the other main criteria, the data does suggest that the competencies and mind-set of a consultant have a significant positive effect on success, and therefore tenure. Here, the results of the ANOVA analysis need to be taken into account as well. However, a significantly lower amount of expected random sampling error was found.

The clear distinction in terms of the positive effect of the competencies & mind-set on the success of a consultant, found in the hierarchy of the Analytical Hierarchy Process, initiated a final data analysis, effectively comparing the results of the research with the available data from Brunel.

Utilizing the aforementioned data of Brunel, based on the collected test results of its assessments of newly hired consultants, it was discovered that new consultants scored above average on four of the seven key competencies & mind-set criteria. However, out of the seven criteria, three were scored below average. In summary, this implies that almost half of the competencies on which newly hired consultants are selected are scored subpar. It speaks for itself that this is not desired by the organization and that change- and improvement is much needed.

In closing we can also conclude that although we have identified much room for improvement, a link between the final results of the Analytical Hierarchy Process and the organizational context and reality of Brunel in regards to the main criteria 'competencies & mind-set' cannot be made due to the lack of additional data in which *individual consultants and their tenure* are compared to the test results, instead of the *average* test results per consultant which is available at the moment.

6.2.2 Implications

Taking the conclusions from the previous section into account, a number of implications can be stated.

The first implication is in regards to the previously named research gap. Here, it was stated that there has not been any targeted research performed regarding the relationship between learning, success and tenure. By conducting the research as has been described in this paper, this research is the first to add to this void in the literature- and empirical research field. The implications for the research gap can be divided into two separate sections.

The first implication covers the relationship between success and tenure. Here, we can conclude that this research specifically adds to the literature and knowledge surrounding objective measurement of performance, or success. The research also adds the scientific evidence that success can indeed lead to a higher tenure, at least in this specific research context.

The second implication covers the relationship between learning and tenure, via the research variable of success. Here, we can conclude that this research adds to the literature and knowledge surrounding the variable 'learning' and specifically to the comparison between organizational learning and individual learning. Additionally, this research also adds to the scientific evidence that there is a positive relationship between learning and tenure, where 'learning' acts as a key success factor. However, the magnitude of this effect is only marginal. Next, as stated in regards to the research gap, it was found that the relationship between 'organizational learning' and 'individual learning' had been insufficiently researched in general. This research also adds to the literature and knowledge in regards to this void by identifying several aspects regarding organizational- and individual learning and researching/analysing them via the Analytical Hierarchy Process. Lastly, this research also added to the knowledge regarding key success factors in regards to the variable of 'learning'. Here, both research groups have selected the 'resilience & knowing how to deal with failures' and the 'adaptability' of consultants as the two most important factors in attaining success. Following this, the two factors 'exploration' and 'organizational learning strategy' are scored significantly lower than all the other factors. Both the high- and low scoring success factors are of value to the ongoing research regarding the focus on learning as an individual.

This research also added to the knowledge regarding key success factors in regards to the variable of 'competencies & mind-set, which was unanimously selected as being the most important factor in attaining success as a consultant. Here, the two research groups scored the two factors 'determination' and 'confidence & courage' as the most important factors in attaining success. Following this, the two lowest scoring success factors were unanimously chosen as well, the 'ambition' of consultants and the affinity/interest of the consultant with- or in the staffing sector in which Brunel operates. Again, both the high- and low scoring success factors are of value to the ongoing research, this time regarding the competencies & mind-set an individual should have in order to attain success.

Regarding the Analytical Hierarchy Process, this research also adds to the literature and theory surrounding the AHP which can be identified as another implication. By using this method as the primary means of analysing the research data from the surveys, also taking into account the uniqueness of the surveys itself in regards to the research towards a clearly defined research gap, more knowledge and information is added towards that which is already known. Lastly, knowledge has also been added by utilizing the AHP in a different manner than usually. Here, we did not finalize our decision towards one of the options of the AHP (one of the alternatives, which is usually done while applying the AHP) but aimed to analyse the five main criteria and the underlying sub criteria that were identified.

Another implication covers the aim of the research to contribute to the academic field by providing managers, (management)teams and organizations with tools and advice to create an environment and/or to introduce certain aspects which make it less likely- or attractive for employees to leave. Taking the results of this research into account, organizations (and especially organizations within the staffing-, secondment- and recruitment sector) will be able to benefit from this and will be helped to avoid the numerous negative consequences of having a low employee tenure.

The final implication revolves around the differences in opinions and experiences surrounding the two research groups, the group of managers and the group of consultants. By analysing the results of the surveys on an individual level, this research forms an accurate image of the differences which these two groups have.

6.2.3 Limitations

An academic research like the one described in this research paper will always be accompanied by a number of limitations.

A first limitation is the fact that this research used averages for some of the analyses and accompanying conclusions. Examples of this are the averages which were used to calculate the percentage of consultants which meet their margin (€) targets and the average assessment scores regarding the HFM Talentindex. Although all of these averages were used in regards to the demanded confidentiality of this sensitive data, the research would have benefitted from more concrete- and accurate numbers.

The next limitation is in regards to the selection of the research subjects and the -organization. First of all, the specific selection of consultants as research subjects can be questioned. Different types of employees might generate different results. Adding to this, the selection of the respondents in regards to the surveys has not been random but a specific selection on the researcher's behalf. Although the generalizability of the results of this research has been proven in an earlier section, these aforementioned aspects must be kept in mind.

Another important limitation is the fact that the actual implementation of the findings of this research, linking closely with the aim of this research to significantly improve the tenure levels within the organization to a number higher than the original number of 2.38 years, has not been achieved due to time-related reasons. Also, even though all of the sub questions (related to the main research question) have been covered by- and implemented in this research, not all of them have been explicitly answered in this discussion and the upcoming conclusion.

Ultimately, even though the implementation phase of the research was not reached and not all sub questions were explicitly answered, the quality of this research was upheld as discussed in the fourth chapter, covering the synthesis and the methodology.

Regarding the Analytical Hierarchy Process, and its usage in this research, some limitations can be stated as well. For starters, due to the large amount of criteria which had to be compared in a pairwise manner (10 (main) + 73 (sub) = 83 in total) and the complicity of some of the criteria, the assumption has been made that at least some of the respondents either a) wrongly interpreted some criteria or b) lost focus at some point during the relatively long list of pairwise-comparisons. Also, as discussed in the last chapter of the analysis of the results, chapter '5.6 Comparison - Competencies & Mind-set at Brunel', the fact that all seven of the sub criteria of the main criteria 'competencies & mind-set' had to be hand-matched to one of the 44 competencies of the HFM Talentindex means that some caution needs to be taken in regards to the generalizability of these results.

Also, the fact that the results of the assessments of the HFM Talentindex regarding the variable 'competencies & mind-set' cannot be individually linked towards tenure (because of the average numbers used in regards to the confidentiality of the individuals) needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results of this research.

Lastly, as indicated by the ANOVA analysis which was performed on the final hierarchy of the Analytical Hierarchy Process, amounts of expected random sampling errors were found linked to high P-values and the interpreted results of the F values. This has to be taken into account in an attempt to prevent these high values from reoccurring in future research.

In closing, a few other minor limitations can be stated. For starters, the main research variable of 'success' could have been defined in another manner. Besides the fact if an individual reaches his/her margin (€)

target, which is the current means of measuring success in this research, another definition of objective measurement of performance (or; success) could have been used.

The fact that only the main criteria of 'competencies & mind-set' has been analysed further (in this case, by comparing it with the test scores of the HFM Talentindex) can be stated as a limitation as well. Here, one of the other four main criteria could have been used to compare the results for that specific criterion with the organizational context and reality of the organization of Brunel as well.

Additionally, the fact that the researcher has been working at the researched organization for more than 3.5 years can also be a limitation in regards to the risks of neglecting-/forgetting about biases on the researcher's side.

Lastly, although plenty of literature has been used and a grounded theoretical framework has been devised, the research could have benefitted from more "scientific weight" in the form of using additional theories (as an example).

6.3 Conclusion

The practical aim- and outcome of this research was to provide organizations within the staffing-, secondment or recruitment sector with the tools and advice to be able to create an environment and/or introduce certain aspects within their day-to-day activities which will make it less likely/attractive for employees to leave the organization. In order to attain this, key factors for employees (specifically speaking; consultants) were identified and introduced in regards to two main research variables; 'success' and 'learning'. Combining all of these factors, the main research question was formulated as: *"To what extent is 'learning' antecedent to 'success' and how can learning be leveraged by Brunel to improve the tenure of its consultants?"*

By using mainly quantitative research methods on two groups of employees (managers and consultants), compromising of (amongst others) a large amount of surveys and by utilizing the *Analytical Hierarchy Process* as the main method of data analysis, it was concluded that the tenure of consultants is largely dependent on a number of key success factors (grouped under five main groups of criteria) and, more importantly, success itself. In short, it has been proven that 'success' has a positive effect on the tenure of consultants. Following this, the research offers a grounded overview of all the identified key success factors. Utilizing- and focussing on these key factors will make it possible for Brunel to more accurately and effectively manage- and steer the tenure of its consultants.

However, after analysing the research data in regards to aforementioned key success factors, it must be concluded that 'learning' only has a very marginal positive effect on tenure. Referring back to the literature review, the positive effect of 'learning' on the success of consultants has been stated and was also proved. However, when comparing the main criterion 'learning' with the other four identified main criteria (and its underlying sub criteria/key success factors), this research has to conclude that 'learning' is only antecedent to 'success' in a very small amount, effectively stating that having a focus on learning as a consultant does not have a positive effect on success, and therefore the accompanying tenure. However, utilizing two learning-related sub criteria, 'resilience & failures' and 'adaptability', an organization like Brunel will be able to leverage 'learning' into improving the tenure of its consultants.

The manner in which Brunel can improve the tenure of its consultants by utilizing the focus on learning is also covered by this research. After analysing the research data via the Analytical Hierarchy Process, two criteria were identified which scored significantly higher than the other learning-related criteria. By utilizing and focussing on these two criteria, Brunel can leverage 'learning' in order to improve the tenure of its consultants, albeit less effectively as most of the other identified key success factors.

Lastly, while examining and comparing the entirety of the key success factors, it was identified that one main criterion (plus its underlying sub criteria/key success factors) was unanimously selected to be significantly more important than the rest in attaining success as a consultant. This main criterion was determined to be the *competencies & mind-set* of an individual. Continuing this statement, this research

specifically identifies two of the underlying sub criteria of this main criterion to be extremely important in attaining success. Additionally, in order to strengthen this statement, a last data analysis was initiated to compare the results for this criterion (the competencies & mind-set) with the organizational context and reality of the organization of Brunel. This resulted in an interesting addition to the implication of the research but the fact that selecting the right competencies & mind-set in consultants does indeed lead to a higher tenure could, in the end, not be proved due to the lack of certain personal- and confidential data which had to be provided by the organization.

However, as indicated by the research, almost all of the sub criteria of the competencies & mind-set of consultant are deemed important. Organizations such as Brunel are therefore wise to keep this criteria in mind while selecting new employees to hire for their organization and in the management of the (personal) development of their employees.

Summarizing, the renewing character of this research is the fact that an area of *operations management* and *performance management* has been being researched by combining the three different research variables; tenure, success and learning, whereas previous studies only looked (at most) at the combination of two of the named research variables (e.g. success vs. tenure, or learning vs. tenure). Additionally, organizations and management(teams) which analyse this research will be provided with tools and advice and will therefore be able to make it less likely/attractive for employees to leave the organization, effectively reaching the aim which this research set out to achieve.

Additionally, this research gives both academics and organizations an accurate insight into the differences in opinions and experiences of two frequently discussed groups, managers vs. employees (consultants).

Also, when we take a look at the earlier formulated Research Process Model, we can conclude that the last two steps which were identified; 1. recommendations to improve the success rate of consultants (shown in light orange) which ultimately lead to 2. recommendations to improve the tenure of consultants of Brunel (shown in dark orange) have been reached as this research set out to achieve.

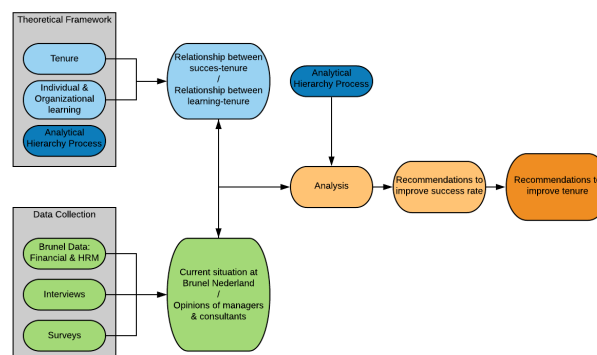


Figure 28: Research Process Model (Repeated)

These recommendations for further research and the organization can be found in the next- and last section of this research paper.

In conclusion, the conceptual model as discussed in chapter '2.5 Conceptual Model' is modified in regards to the results of the research.

First (1), we state the positive effect which success has on tenure, as has been proven in this specific research. Following this (2), the influence of 'learning' on success (and therefore, tenure) was found to be negative, apart from a pair of specific sub criteria of this main criterion which were found to be substantially more likely to increase the success of consultants. Lastly (3), the positive influence of the 'competencies & mind-set' has been added as a moderating variable.

In summary, this conceptual model summarizes the performed research in a concrete manner and simultaneously answers the main research question of: *“To what extent is ‘learning’ antecedent to ‘success’ and how can learning be leveraged by Brunel to improve the tenure of its consultants?”*

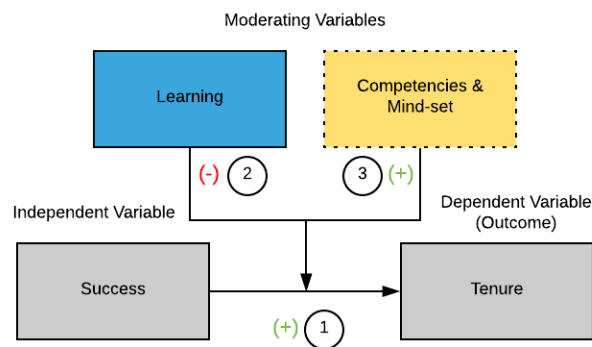


Figure 29: Final Conceptual Model

6.4 Recommendations

Besides the recommendations which were made in the discussion, the conclusion and the implications & limitations which accompany it, this section covers the additional recommendations. These recommendations are categorized into two different categories; recommendations in order to undertake/improve further research and recommendations in order to improve the specific business case of this research.

6.4.1 Recommendations Further Research

Starting with the recommendations in order to undertake/improve further research, the following recommendations are advised.

First of all, the recommendations which were already made in the discussion and conclusion are summarized. In short, it is advised that:

- More research is performed while utilizing even more accurate numbers/figures as opposed to the averages which were mainly used in this research;
- Different types of employees are researched, as opposed to the ‘consultants’ which were central in this research, in an attempt to further increase the generalizability;
- Efforts could be made in order to attain a more random method of sampling the employees which partake in the research;
- Further research strives to implement the proposed recommendations which the research provides, which is something that this research did not achieve;
- While using the AHP, less pairwise-comparisons are used in order to rule out potential mistakes and/or reduced focus of the respondents;
- The statement that the competencies & mind-set of consultants have a significant positive effect on their success/tenure should be further researched utilizing individual- and measurable research data originating from an organization;
- Further research should be undertaken while utilizing a different definition of ‘success’ or objective measurement of performance as opposed to the current (attaining a margin (€) target);
- Further analysis/research could be undertaken regarding one of the other four main criteria besides the ‘competencies & mind-set’;
- The research could benefit from more “scientific weight” in the form of using additional theories;

- More research could be performed regarding the differences in opinions and experiences of the two discussed groups, managers vs. employees (consultants).

Additionally, more research should be performed, in a wide variety of organizations, regarding the relationship between 1. success-tenure, 2. learning-tenure and 3. the competencies & mind-set-tenure. All of these relationships, and the effects which have been found, have been described in this research paper. However, as indicated before, further studies could enrich the conclusions from this specific research. This is also due to the fact that a main research question is never fully answered by a single academic research, meaning; there is always room for improvement.

Also, it is suggested that other variables (/criteria) are to be selected as well in order to research their relationship with tenure. Lastly, in continuation of this thought, another research subject besides 'consultants' could be selected as well in order to ascertain if the proved effects of this research exists with other types of employees as well.

In addition, when performing a similar research as described in this research paper, effort could be made to ensure that the final respondents are more diverse in terms of tenure, gender, age and business line.

Also, seeing as the usage of the aforementioned AHP format only allowed 20 respondents in total, the research could have benefitted from using another format due to the fact that these sometimes allow for a larger number of respondents.

Additionally, research could be performed regarding the differences between the Big Five Personality Test (as used in the literature review) and the HFM Talentindex as used by Brunel. Although the inner workings of both assessments are (relatively) the same, utilizing another assessment could yield different results.

Regarding the research variable 'learning', another recommendation can be made. Here, a more specific focus could have been applied in regards to the organizational- vs. individual learning discussion. Looking back on this specific research, learning is more broadly interpreted, as opposed to making a real distinction between the two different forms and researching their similarities and differences.

6.4.2 Recommendations Brunel Nederland B.V.

Ending with the recommendations in order to improve the specific business case of Brunel, the following recommendations are advised:

- The organization should strive to implement the proposed recommendations which the research provides, something which this research did not achieve due to time-related reasons;
- The organization should focus its efforts on the identified key success factors to more accurately and effectively manage- and steer the tenure of its consultants;
- The organization should focus on improving its selection of new employees in regards to the 3 competencies which are (on average) scored subpar by hired consultants of the past;
- The statement that the competencies & mind-set of consultants have a significant positive effect on their success/tenure should be further researched utilizing individual- and measurable research data originating from the organization itself;
- Brunel should address the stated differences in opinions and experiences of the two discussed groups, managers vs. employees (consultants) and try to analyse these differences in order to discover additional ways for the organization to improve.

In short, when following the recommendations as stated above, Brunel (and similar organizations) will be provided with specific tools and advice and will therefore be able to make it less likely/attractive for employees to leave the organization, achieving the aim of this research which was set out in the beginning.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey – Introduction & Explanation

The entire survey can be reached via the following link: <https://forms.gle/ZGPCB7MZsBqz8UMSA>

Brunel
access to excellence

Section 1 of 8

Succesfactoren Brunel

Bedankt dat je deel wilt nemen aan mijn onderzoek!

Voor degenen die mij nog niet kennen, mijn naam is Mike van L momenteel bezig met mijn deeltijd afstudeerscriptie voor de M

Met behulp van dit onderzoek proberen we de belangrijkste suc vijftal pijlers, elk met diverse sub criteria, worden hiervoor met t m.b.t. de vragenlijst volgt hierna, het onderzoek neemt maxima

De gegeven antwoorden worden anoniem verwerkt, we zijn ech achtergrondinformatie (functie, dienstjaren, etc.).

Nogmaals bedankt en veel succes!

Instructie

Er zijn een vijftal pijlers geïnventariseerd m.b.t. de succesfactoren voor consultants, deze zijn als volgt:

- De juiste achtergrond
- Faciliteren & Motiveren
- Coaching & Begeleiding
- Competenties & Mind-set
- Focus op leren

Deze vijftal pijlers (met elk hun sub criteria) worden in de vragenlijst paarsgewijs tegen elkaar afgezet m.b.v. een vijfpuntschaal. De schaal is hierbij als volgt:

- 5 = Beiden factoren zijn EVEN BELANGRIJK
- 4 & 6 = De ene factor is IETS BELANGRIJKER dan de andere factor
- 3 & 7 = De ene factor is BELANGRIJKER dan de andere factor
- 2 & 8 = De ene factor is VEEL BELANGRIJKER dan de andere factor
- 1 & 9 = De ene factor KAN NIET MEER BELANGRIJK ZIJN dan de andere factor

Het onderstaande voorbeeld illustreert de bovenstaande instructie. Hierbij is te zien dat:

- Bij voorbeeld nummer 1: Opleidingsniveau en werkervaring EVEN BELANGRIJK zijn
- Bij voorbeeld nummer 2: Opleidingsniveau IETS BELANGRIJKER is dan werkervaring
- Bij voorbeeld nummer 3: Werkervaring NIET BELANGRIJKER KAN ZIJN dan opleidingsniveau

Voorbeeld

1

Opleidingsniveau *
Hoe verhoudt de factor OPLEIDINGSNIVEAU zich tot de factor WERKERVARING?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Opleidingsniveau Werkervaring

2

Opleidingsniveau *
Hoe verhoudt de factor OPLEIDINGSNIVEAU zich tot de factor WERKERVARING?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Opleidingsniveau Werkervaring

3

Opleidingsniveau *
Hoe verhoudt de factor OPLEIDINGSNIVEAU zich tot de factor WERKERVARING?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Opleidingsniveau Werkervaring

Figure 30: Survey – Introduction & Explanation

Appendix 2: Example of AHP Scoring Format (MS Excel)

		Criteria		more important ?	Scale
i	j	A	B	A or B	(1-9)
1	2	Background	Facilitating &		
1	3		Coaching & Guidance		
1	4		Competencies & Mind-		
1	5		Focus on learning		
1	6				
1	7				
1	8				
2	3		Facilitating & Motivating	Coaching & Guidance	
2	4	Competencies & Mind-			
2	5	Focus on learning			
2	6				
2	7				
2	8				
3	4	Coaching & Guidance	Competencies & Mind-		
3	5		Focus on learning		
3	6				
3	7				
3	8				
4	5	Competencies & Mind-set	Focus on learning		
4	6				
4	7				
4	8				
5	6				
5	7				
5	8				
6	7				
6	8				
7	8				

Intensity	Definition	Explanation
1	Equal importance	Two elements contribute equally to the objective
3	Moderate importance	Experience and judgment slightly favor one element over another
5	Strong Importance	Experience and judgment strongly favor one element over another
7	Very strong importance	One element is favored very strongly over another, its dominance is demonstrated in practice
9	Extreme importance	The evidence favoring one element over another is of the highest possible order of affirmation

Figure 31: Example of AHP Scoring Format (MS Excel)

Appendix 3: Overview of all 44 Competencies (HFM Talentindex)

Competenties

Operationele kracht	Interpersoonlijke kracht	Persoonlijke kracht	Conceptuele kracht
<p>ACCURATESSE Effectief hanteren van gedetailleerde gegevens en consequent letten op details.</p> <p>BESLUITVAARDIGHEID Zelf beslissingen nemen, hiernaar handelen en knopen durven doorhakken.</p> <p>DELEGEREN Werk overdragen aan anderen op een begrijpelijke, gestructureerde en controleerbare wijze.</p> <p>KWALITEITSGERICHTHEID Hoge eisen stellen aan de kwaliteit van producten en diensten en daarnaar handelen.</p> <p>ONDERHANDELEN In een situatie met een gemeenschappelijk doel, maar verschillende deelbelangen, komen tot overeenstemming.</p> <p>PLANNEN Werkzaamheden op een systematische wijze opzetten en inroosteren, prioriteiten stellen.</p> <p>PLICHTSBESEF Commitment tonen aan gemaakte afspraken.</p> <p>PRESENTEREN Het eigen verhaal zo vertellen dat een effectieve overdracht van informatie plaatsvindt.</p> <p>PRESTEREN ONDER DRUK Effectief blijven presteren bij hoge werkdruk, tegenslag of teleurstelling.</p> <p>RESULTAATGERICHTHEID Gericht zijn op het realiseren van doelstellingen en resultaten, vasthoudendheid tonen bij tegenslagen.</p> <p>STRUCTUREREN Structuur aanbrengen, doorvoeren en vasthouden in de dagelijkse gang van zaken.</p> <p>STUREN Richting geven aan anderen, de leiding nemen.</p>	<p>AANPASSINGSVERMOGEN Handelen doelmatig afstemmen op verschillende personen.</p> <p>CONTACTVAARDIGHEID In staat zijn om effectief contact te leggen met anderen.</p> <p>DRAAGVLAK CREËREN Zich een voorstelling maken van wat er bij anderen leeft en hen betrekken bij veranderingen.</p> <p>FEEDBACK GEVEN Medewerkers kader bieden door hen een oordeel over hun prestaties te geven.</p> <p>KLANTGERICHTHEID Identificeren van wensen en behoeften van de klant en hierop handelend inspelen.</p> <p>LUISTERVAARDIGHEID Belangrijke informatie oppikken uit mondelinge communicatie; doorvragen ter verduidelijking.</p> <p>MOTIVEREN Medewerkers stimuleren om gewenst gedrag te vertonen of gewenste activiteiten te ondernemen.</p> <p>ONDERZOEKEN VAN DRIJFVEREN Het perspectief van anderen achterhalen.</p> <p>ORGANISATIESENSITIVITEIT Onderkennen wat de invloed is van de eigen beslissingen of activiteiten op andere delen van de organisatie.</p> <p>OVERTUIGEN Met argumenten en zeggingskracht ideeën en meningen presenteren zodat instemming verkregen wordt.</p> <p>SAMENWERKEN In samenspel met anderen een effectieve bijdrage leveren aan een gemeenschappelijk doel.</p> <p>TEAMBUILDING De samenwerking binnen het team stimuleren om gemeenschappelijke doelen te bereiken.</p>	<p>ASSERTIVITEIT Effectief voor zichzelf opkomen.</p> <p>COMMERCIELE DRIVE De wil en de kracht tonen om business te genereren.</p> <p>DIENSTVERLENEND Erop gericht zijn anderen te ondersteunen in hun doelen.</p> <p>DRIVE Gedrevenheid.</p> <p>DYNAMIEK Levendige en enthousiaste stijl van handelen.</p> <p>FLEXIBILITEIT Eigen gedrag of benadering kunnen veranderen om een vastgesteld doel te bereiken.</p> <p>INITIATIEF Kansen zien en tot actie overgaan.</p> <p>INTEGRITEIT Algemeen aanvaarde normen naleven in activiteiten die met de functie te maken hebben.</p> <p>ONDERNEMERSCHAP Nieuwe mogelijkheden zien en/of creëren binnen bestaande of nieuwe kaders.</p> <p>SENSITIVITEIT Herkennen van en inspelen op beweegredenen, motieven en gevoelens van anderen.</p> <p>STRESSBESTENDIGHEID Spanning aankunnen.</p> <p>VERANDERINGSBEREIDHEID Omgaan met verandering, zich kunnen verplaatsen in het algemene belang en daarnaar willen handelen.</p> <p>ZELFONTWIKKELING Zich bewust zijn van eigen sterke en zwakke punten; bewust aan de eigen ontwikkeling werken.</p>	<p>ANALYSEREN EN OORDEELSVORMING Erop gericht zijn zaken systematisch te onderzoeken.</p> <p>CREATIVITEIT Met originele oplossingen komen voor problemen. Nieuwe werkwijzen bedenken en alternatieve invalshoeken kiezen.</p> <p>HELICOPTERVIEW Overzicht houden over de situatie en afstand nemen om overzicht te creëren.</p> <p>INNOVEREN Mogelijkheden zien om veranderingen en verbeteringen in de praktijk te brengen.</p> <p>MARKTGERICHTHEID Laten blijken goed geïnformeerd te zijn over de ontwikkelingen in de markt.</p> <p>OMGEVINGSBEWUSTZIJN Laten blijken goed geïnformeerd te zijn over ontwikkelingen in de omgeving en deze effectief benutten voor de eigen organisatie.</p> <p>STRATEGISCH INZICHT Lijnen uitzetten voor de organisatie.</p>

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Figure 32: Overview of all 44 Competencies (HFM Talentindex)



Appendix 4: AHP Group Consensus Indicator

Additional background information regarding the group consensus indicator in regards to the Analytical Hierarchy Process of the *Business Performance Management Singapore Group (BPMSG)* (Goepel K., 2013).

This page and more information regarding the BPMSG can be found via the following link: <https://bpmsg.com/ahp-group-consensus-indicator-how-to-understand/>

AHP Group Consensus Indicator – how to understand and interpret?

BPMSG's [AHP excel template](#) and AHP online software [AHP-OS](#) can be used for group decision making by asking several participants to give their inputs to a project in form of pairwise comparisons. Aggregation of individual judgments (AIJ) is done by calculating the geometric mean of the elements of all decision matrices using this consolidated decision matrix to derive the group priorities.

AHP consensus indicator

In [1] I proposed an **AHP group consensus indicator** to quantify the consensus of the group, *i.e.* to have an estimate of the agreement on the outcoming priorities between participants. This indicator ranges from 0% to 100%. Zero percent corresponds to no consensus at all, 100% to full consensus. This indicator is derived from the concept of diversity based on Shannon alpha and beta entropy, as described in [2]. It is a measure of **homogeneity** of priorities between the participants and can also be interpreted as a **measure of overlap** between priorities of the group members.

How to interpret?

If we would categorise group consensus in the three categories *low*, *moderate* and *high*, I would assign the following percentages to these categories:

- *very low*: below 50%
- *low* consensus: 50% to 65%
- *moderate* consensus: 65% to 75%
- *high* consensus: 75% to 85%
- *very high* consensus: above 85%

Values below 50% indicate that there is practically no consensus within the group and a high diversity of judgments. Values in the 80% – 90% range indicate a high overlap of priorities and excellent agreement of judgments from the group members.

AHP Consensus indicator and AHP Consistency Ratio CR

AHP allows for (logical) inconsistencies in judgments; the **AHP consistency ratio CR** is an indicator for this, and – as a rule of thumb – CR should not exceed 10% significantly. Please read my posts [here](#) and [here](#).

It can be shown that, given a sufficiently large group size, consistency of the aggregate comparison matrix is guaranteed, regardless of the consistency measures of the individual comparison matrices, if the geometric mean (AIJ) is used to aggregate [3]. In other words, if the group of participants is large enough, the consistency ratio of the consolidated group matrix CR will decrease below 10% and is no longer an issue.

Consensus has to be strictly distinguished from consistency. The **consensus** is derived from the outcoming priorities and **has nothing to do with the consistency ratio**. Whether you have a small or a large group, in both cases consensus could be high or low, reflecting the “agreement” between group members. Even if you ask a million people, there could be no agreement (consensus) on a certain topic: half of them have the exact opposite judgment as the other half. As a result, the consensus indicator would be zero: there is *no overlap*, the total group is divided into two sub-groups having opposite opinions.

Analyzing group consensus – groups and sub-groups

The beauty of the proposed AHP consensus indicator based on Shannon entropy is the possibility to analyse further, and to find out, whether there are sub-groups (cluster) of participants with high consensus among themselves, but with low consensus to other sub-groups. This can be done using the concept of [alpha and beta diversity](#) [2]. I have published an [excel template](#) to to analyze similarities between the samples based on partitioning diversity in alpha and beta diversity. It can be also be used for your AHP results to analyse group consensus.

Figure 33: Background Information AHP Group Consensus Indicator