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# 1.Introduction

Change management is defined as the process of achieving the smooth implementation of change by planning and introducing it systematically, taking into account the likelihood of it being resisted. Change, it is often said, is the only thing that remains constant in organizations.

As A P Sloan wrote in My Years with General Motors (1967) ‘The circumstances of an ever-changing market and an ever-changing product are capable of breaking any business organization if that organization is unprepared for change.’ Change cannot just be allowed to happen.

It needs to be managed. As described in this chapter, to manage change it is first necessary to understand the types of change and how the process works.

It is important to bear in mind that while those wanting change need to be constant about ends, they have to be flexible about means.

This requires them to come to an understanding of the various models of change that have been developed and of the factors that create resistance to change and how to minimize such resistance.

In the light of an understanding of these models and the phenomenon of resistance to change they will be better equipped to make use of the guidelines for change set out in this chapter.

Change often takes place incrementally but it can take the form of a transformation of the organization, and the considerations affecting the management of transformational change are discussed in the penultimate section of the chapter. The role of HR in managing change is examined in the last section of the chapter.

## 2.Understanding change management

Change management is a systematic approach to dealing with the transition or transformation of an organization's goals, processes and technologies. The purpose of change management is to implement strategies for effecting and controlling change and helping people to adapt to change.

Change management activities range from individual projects to large programs, such as digital transformation that introduces many new processes and applications. Change efforts often involve management teams and other stakeholders. Department-level management and employee buy-in is essential.

### Definition and Importance

Change management refers to the structured approach to ensure that changes are thoroughly and smoothly implemented. It is vital for organizations to adapt to evolving markets and technologies.

### Types of change

#### Strategic change

Strategic change is concerned with broad, long-term and organization-wide issues involving change. It is about moving to a future state that has been defined generally in terms of strategic vision and scope. It will cover the purpose and mission of the organization, its corporate philosophy on such matters as growth, quality, innovation and values concerning employees and customers, competitive positioning and strategic

goals for achieving and maintaining competitive advantage and for product-market development.

These goals are supported by policies concerning marketing, sales, manufacturing, product and process development, finance and human resource management.

***Pettigrew and Whipp (1991) on strategic change***

*The process by which strategic changes are made seldom moves directly through neat, successive stages of analysis, choice and implementation. Changes in the firm's environment persistently threaten the course and logic of strategic changes: dilemma abounds... We conclude that one of the defining features of the process, in so far as management action is concerned, is ambiguity; seldom is there an easily isolated logic to strategic change. Instead, that process may derive its motive force from an amalgam of economic, personal and political imperatives. Their introduction through time requires that those responsible for managing that process make continual assessments, repeated choices and multiple adjustments.*

**Operational change**

Operational change relates to new systems, procedures, structures or technology that will have an immediate effect on working arrangements within a part of the organization. But its impact on people can be more significant than broader strategic change and it has to be handled just as carefully.

**Transformational change**

Transformational change takes place when there are fundamental and comprehensive changes in structures, processes and behaviors that have a dramatic effect on the ways in which the organization functions.

### **3. The change process**

Conceptually, the change process starts with an awareness of the need for change. An analysis of this situation and the factors that have created it leads to a diagnosis of their distinctive characteristics and an indication of the direction in which action needs to be taken. Possible courses of action can then be identified and evaluated and a choice made of the preferred action.

It is then necessary to decide how to get from here to there. Managing change during this transition state is a critical phase in the change process.

It is here that the problems of introducing change emerge and have to be managed. These problems can include resistance to change, low stability, high levels of stress, misdirected energy, conflict and loss of momentum. Hence the need to do everything possible to anticipate reactions and likely impediments to the introduction of change.

## **4. Change models**

The best known change models are those developed by Lewin (1951) and Beckhard (1969). But other important contributions to an understanding of the mechanisms for change have been made by Thurley

(1979), Bandura (1986) and Beer et al (1990).

Lewin

The basic mechanisms for managing change as set out by Lewin (1951) are:

- Unfreezing – altering the present stable equilibrium that supports existing behaviors
- Changing – developing new responses based on new information.
- Refreezing – stabilizing the change by introducing the new responses into the person and attitudes.

Approaches to managing change,

Thurley (1979)

Directive – the imposition of change in crisis situations or when other methods have failed. This is done by the exercise of managerial power without consultation.

Bargained – this approach recognizes that power is shared between the employer and the employed and change requires negotiation, compromise and agreement before being implemented.

‘Hearts and minds’ – an all-embracing thrust to change the attitudes, values and beliefs of the whole workforce. This ‘normative’ approach (i.e. one that starts from a definition of what management thinks is right or ‘normal’) seeks ‘commitment’ and ‘shared vision’ but does not necessarily include involvement or participation.

Analytical – a theoretical approach to the change process using models of change such as those described above. It proceeds sequentially from the analysis and diagnosis of the situation, through the setting of objectives, the design of the change process, the evaluation of the results and, finally, the determination of the objectives for the next stage in the change process. This is the rational and logical approach much favored by consultants – external and internal. But change seldom proceeds as smoothly as this model would suggest. Emotions, power politics and external pressures mean that the rational approach, although it might be the right way to start, is difficult to sustain.

Action-based – this recognizes that the way managers behave in practice bears little resemblance to the analytical, theoretical model. The distinction between managerial thought and managerial action blurs in practice to the point of invisibility. What managers think is what they do. Real life therefore often results in a ‘ready, aim, fire’ approach to change management. This typical approach to change starts with a broad belief that some sort of problem exists, although it may not be well defined. The identification of possible solutions, often on a trial or error basis, leads to a clarification of the nature of the problem and a shared understanding of a possible optimal solution, or at least a framework within which solutions can be discovered

## 5. Resistance to change

People resist change

Because it is seen as a threat to familiar patterns of behaviors as well as to status and financial rewards. Woodward (1968) made this point clearly.

However, some people will welcome change as an opportunity. These need to be identified and where feasible they can be used to help in the introduction of change as change agents. Specifically, the main reasons for resisting change are as follows:

- The shock of the new – people are suspicious of anything that they perceive will upset their established routines, methods of working or conditions of employment.
- Economic fears – loss of money, threats to job security.
- Inconvenience – the change will make life more difficult.
- Uncertainty – change can be worrying because of uncertainty about its likely impact.
- Symbolic fears – a small change that may affect some treasured symbol, such as a separate office or a reserved parking space, may symbolize big ones, especially when employees are uncertain about how extensive the programme of change will be.
- Threat to interpersonal relationships – anything that disrupts the customary social
- their established routines, methods of working or conditions of employment.

They do not want to lose the security of what is familiar to them.

They may not believe statements by management that the change is for their benefit as well as that of the organization; sometimes with good reason.

They may feel that management has ulterior motives and sometimes, the louder the protestations of management, the less they will be believed. A separate office or a reserved parking space, may symbolize big ones, especially when employees are uncertain about how extensive the programme of change will be. Relationships and standards of the group will be resisted. Threat to status or skill – the change is perceived as reducing the status of individuals or as de-skilling them. Competence fears – concern about the ability to cope with new demands or to acquire new skills.

### Overcoming resistance

Resistance to change can be difficult to overcome even when it is not detrimental to those concerned.

But the attempt must be made. The first step is to analyse the potential impact of change by considering how it will affect people in their jobs. The reasons for resisting change set out above can be used as a checklist of where there may be problems, generally, with groups or with individuals.

The analysis should indicate what aspects of the proposed change may be supported generally or by specified individuals and which aspects may be resisted. So far as possible, the potentially hostile or negative reactions of people and the reasons for them should be identified. It is necessary to try to understand the likely feelings and fears of those affected so that unnecessary worries can be relieved and, as far as possible, ambiguities can be resolved.

In making this analysis, the individual introducing the change – the change agent – should recognize that new ideas are likely to be suspect and should make ample provision for the discussion of reactions to proposals to ensure complete understanding of them.

A communication strategy to explain the proposed change should be prepared and implemented so that unnecessary fears are allayed.

## 6.Implementing change

The following guidelines on implementing change were produced by Nadler and Tushman (1980) The change process will take place more smoothly with the help of credible change agents – internal or external. These are people who facilitate change by providing advice and support on its introduction and management. It is often assumed that only people from outside the organization can take on the change agent role because they are independent and do not ‘carry any baggage’.

They can be useful, but people from within the firm who are respected and credible can do the job well. This is often the role of HR specialists, but the use of line managers adds extra value.

### Guidelines for change management

The achievement of sustainable change requires strong commitment and visionary leadership from the top.

Understanding is necessary of the culture of the organization and the levers for change that are most likely to be effective in that culture.

Those concerned with managing change at all levels should have the temperament and leadership skills appropriate to the circumstances of the organization and its change strategies.

Change is more likely to be successful if there is a ‘burning platform’ to justify it, i.e. a powerful and convincing reason for change.

People support what they help to create. Commitment to change is improved if those affected by change are allowed to participate as fully as possible in planning and implementing it. The aim should be to get them to ‘own’ the change as something they want and will be glad to live with.

The reward system should encourage innovation and recognize success in achieving change.

Change will always involve failure as well as success. The failures must be expected and learnt from. There are always people in organizations who can act as champions of change. They will welcome the challenges and opportunities that change can provide.

They are the ones to be chosen as change agents. Resistance to change is inevitable if the individuals concerned feel that they are going to be worse off – implicitly or explicitly. The inept management of change will produce that reaction.

## 7.The role of HR in managing change

If HR is concerned – as it should be – in playing a major role in the achievement of continuous improvement in organizational capability and individual performance, and in the HR processes that support that improvement, then it will need to be involved in facilitating change. Ulrich (1997a) believes that one of the key roles of HR professionals is to act as change agents, delivering organizational transformation and culture change.

Strategic HRM is as much if not more about managing change during the process of implementation as it is about producing long-term plans; a point emphasized by Purcell (1999) who believes that: ‘We should be much more sensitive to processes of organizational change and avoid being trapped in the logic of rational

choice.’ In 2001 Purcell suggested that change is especially important in HRM strategies ‘since their concern is with the future, the unknown, thinking of and learning how to do things differently, undoing the ways things have been done in the past, and managing its implementation’.

He believes that the focus of strategy is on implementation, where HR can play a major part.

The importance of the human resource element in achieving change has been emphasized by Johnson and Scholes (1997):

Organizations which successfully manage change are those which have integrated their human resource management policies with their strategies and the strategic change process... training, employee relations, compensation packages and so on are not merely operational issues for the personnel department; they are crucially concerned with the way in which employees relate to the nature and direction of the firm and as such they can both block strategic change and be significant facilitators of strategic change.

HR professionals as change agents Caldwell (2001) categorizes.

HR change agents in four dimensions:

Transformational change – a major change that has a dramatic effect on HR policy and practice across the whole organization.

Incremental change – gradual adjustments of HR policy and practices that affect single activities or multiple functions.

HR vision – a set of values and beliefs that affirm the legitimacy of the HR function as strategic business partner.

HR expertise – the knowledge and skills that define the unique contribution the HR professional can make to effective people management. Across these dimensions, the change agent roles that Caldwell suggests can be carried out by HR professionals are those of change champions, change adapters, change consultants and change synergists.

The contribution of HR to change management

HR practitioners may be involved in initiating change but they can also act as a stabilizing force in situations where change would be damaging.

Mohrman and Lawler (1998) believe that: The human resources function can help the organization develop the capability to weather the changes that will continue to be part of the organizational landscape. It can help with the ongoing learning processes required to assess the impact of change and enable the organization to make corrections and enhancements to the changes. It can help the organization develop a new psychological contract and ways to give employees a stake in the changes that are occurring and in the performance of the organization.

Ulrich (1998) argues that HR professionals are ‘not fully comfortable or compatible in the role of change agent’, and that their task is therefore not to carry out change but to get change done. But HR practitioners are in a good position to understand possible points of resistance to change and they can help to facilitate the information flow and understanding that will help to overcome that resistance.

Grattan (2000) stresses the need for HR practitioners to: ‘Understand the state of the company, the extent of the embedding of processes and structures throughout the organization, and the behavior and attitudes of individual employees.’



She believes that ‘The challenge is to implement the ideas’ and the solution is to ‘build a guiding coalition by involving line managers’, which means ‘creating issue-based cross-functional action teams that will initially make recommendations and later move into action’.

This approach ‘builds the capacity to change’.

## **8. Conclusion & Recommendations**

In conclusion, effective change management is essential for the success of any organization. HR plays a pivotal role in navigating the complexities of change, addressing challenges, and leveraging best practices. It is recommended that organizations invest in training for HR professionals and develop robust communication strategies to facilitate smoother transitions.

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