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The role of strategic communication and sensemaking in implementing management innovation

Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal

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Abstract

Purpose – This study explores the dynamics of implementing management innovation, focusing on a case of innovation in human resource management within a large Japanese firm. It aims to understand how innovators perceive and react to employees' evolving responses to management innovation and how these perceptions and reactions influence innovation implementation.

Design/methodology/approach – The study employed a single-case study design because it was suitable for exploring complex phenomena within their real-life context. It involved an in-depth analysis of a firm undergoing management innovation through participant observation, interviews and analysis of company documents.

Findings – The study identified a multi-phase process of management innovation at the research site, characterized by initial resistance followed by gradual acceptance of the innovation. Innovators' strategies to manage and respond to employee feedback and adaptation of the innovation process were crucial in the eventual acceptance of management innovations. Despite achieving a degree of acceptance, cultural and structural challenges persisted, highlighting the complex interplay between innovation, organizational culture and employee responses.

Originality/value – This research contributes to the management innovation literature by illuminating the intricate dynamics of implementing management innovation. It extends existing theories of innovation implementation by demonstrating the significance of managing recipient perceptions through strategic communication and the importance of cultural and contextual sensitivities in management innovation.

Keywords Management innovation, Sensemaking, Strategic communication, Resistance, Organizational politics

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Over the last decade, management innovation has been considered one of the sources of competitive advantage within organizational studies, underscoring its pivotal role in altering the way management work is performed to enhance organizational performance (Mol and Birkinshaw, 2009; Volberda *et al.*, 2013; Hamel, 2006). Despite the potential benefits of management innovation for the organization, innovation recipients (i.e. employees) may resist such initiatives. This resistance often arises because management innovation introduces a novel state that can be perceived as a threat to their established routines and security (Robert *et al.*, 2019).

Whether a management innovation practice will be accepted or resisted by the recipients depends on how they make sense of the innovation. According to Weick's sensemaking theory, when a new practice is introduced, individuals engage in sensemaking to give meaning to their experience and help them understand and adapt to the new situation. The sensemaking process directly shapes individual attitudes, manifesting in their behaviors (Weick, 1995, 2012).

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Existing theories of management innovation and organizational change recognize the importance of how recipients perceive and respond to these new conditions (Klein and Sorra, 1996; Piderit, 2000). Relatedly, Oreg *et al.* (2018) argued that change agents need to consider changes in recipients' reactions to innovation practices and adjust their initiatives accordingly for successful implementation. These arguments suggest the importance of strategic communication by innovators to influence how recipients understand and make sense of new initiatives. Effective communication can help align the innovation process with recipients' values and interests, making them more likely to support the initiative.

As shown in empirical research on technology adoption, recipients' perceptions and resulting attitudes toward an innovation shift over time as they experience the innovation initiative (Rahi and Abd Ghani 2019; Ye *et al.*, 2023). These shifts indicate that innovators must develop and continuously adjust strategic communications to manage these evolving perceptions. Additionally, innovators should adjust their strategic communications and the innovation initiative, using recipients' evolving reactions to innovation initiatives as feedback.

Despite the importance of this feedback loop, prior studies have paid little attention to the evolving nature of recipients' perception and responses to the innovation initiative as well as how innovators react to such recipients' responses. This study investigates this feedback loop in management innovation by focusing on the innovator's sensegiving through strategic communication (Weber *et al.*, 2015) and the recipient's sensemaking (Weick, 1995). By integrating the constructs of sensemaking and strategic communication to investigate this feedback loop, we can expand existing knowledge of management innovation implementation.

Because research on this topic is nascent, an exploratory study entailing an in-depth analysis of a case study of management innovation was conducted, primarily focusing on how innovators perceive and react to recipients' responses. Therefore, this research explores the dynamics of implementing management innovation, focusing on a case of innovation in human resource management (HRM innovation) within a large Japanese firm. The current study aims to understand how innovators within organizations perceive and react to employees' evolving responses to management innovation and how these perceptions and reactions influence the implementation of management innovation.

This paper is structured as follows. The second section reviews the relevant literature on management innovation, sensemaking, and strategic communication as theoretical background for this study. The third section details the research methodology, including the case study approach and data collection methods. The fourth section presents the research findings, including those that highlight the dynamics of sense-giving and sense-making in the context of HRM innovation. The fifth section builds on the findings of the previous sections and develops discussions of the theoretical and practical implications. The final section concludes the paper with a summary of key insights and implications for future research.

Through in-depth case studies, this study sheds light on the intricate feedback loop between innovators and recipients in management innovation in human resource management and how strategic communication and evolving perceptions influence the successful implementation of new measures. The objective is to contribute to a deeper understanding of how strategic communication and evolving perceptions affect the success of adopting and implementing new management practices.

Theoretical background

Previous research suggests that for management innovation to be successfully implemented, innovators need to strategically craft communication to influence recipients' sensemaking of the innovation, ensuring they perceive a fit with the innovation (Benders, 1999; Meyerson and Scully, 1995). Building on these insights and grounded in existing theories on organizational change and innovation (Piderit, 2000; Oreg *et al.*, 2018), this study focuses on the evolving perceptions of both innovators and recipients. In this view, management innovation is depicted as a feedback loop where recipients' attitudes and innovators' adjustments continually influence each other. This section provides definitions of key constructs—management innovation, sensemaking, strategic communication—reviews related research and formulates the research question based on identified gaps and opportunities in the existing literature.

Management innovation involves substantial changes in non-technical aspects of organizational management (Volberda *et al.*, 2013). It supports technological innovation by enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of internal processes, thereby fostering sustainable competitive advantage (Volberda *et al.*, 2013; Walker *et al.*, 2015). The literature presents two perspectives: one views management innovation as "new to the state of the art," while the other sees it as new to the organization (Birkinshaw *et al.*, 2008; McCabe, 2002; Zbaracki, 1998). This study adopts the latter perspective, considering management innovation in adopting techniques proven effective elsewhere (Lin and Su, 2014; Vaccaro, 2012). While the importance of both perspectives cannot be overemphasized, the latter is more consistent with the research purpose. This study focuses on the evolving nature of the recipient's reaction to the innovation and the innovator's sense-giving. It also considers the possibility that the innovator tailors the innovation to the organizational context and that the recipient reacts to it based on their preconceptions. Therefore, innovations new to the organizations are better than ones new to the state-of-the-art for the current study.

Research on management innovation has theoretically and empirically explored how to successfully implement innovations. Klein and Sorra (1996) theorized that innovation acceptance increases when it aligns with recipients' values. They posited that recipients' pre-existing schemas shape how they perceive and make sense of the innovation. Empirical evidence from a study on business process reengineering supports this, showing that employees' past experiences influence their reactions to new practices (Heusinkveld and Benders, 2012). These concepts echo Lewin's idea that people react based on their perceptions rather than objective reality (Lewin, 1936). These previous arguments suggest recipients' sensemaking of management innovation is crucial. Reviewing various definitions of sensemaking in prior studies, Maitlis and Christianson (2014) defined sensemaking as "a process, prompted by violated expectations, that involves attending to and bracketing cues in the environment, creating intersubjective meaning through cycles of interpretation and action, and thereby enacting a more ordered environment from which further cues can be drawn." (p. 67). This definition corresponds to the process by which employees make sense of new management practices they encounter. In this process, employees interpret cues in the environment and new practices and react based on their interpretations.

According to Weick (1979), in sensemaking within organizations, the enactment-selection-retention loop operates as a continuous feedback cycle. Ecological changes trigger enactment, where individuals take actions to interpret and respond to these changes, effectively shaping their environment. The outcomes of these actions undergo selection, where the most plausible explanations and interpretations are chosen, filtering out less useful information. These selected interpretations are then stored in retention, forming a knowledge base that influences future actions and sensemaking processes. This retained knowledge feeds back into the loop, guiding how new changes are enacted upon, thus creating a dynamic and iterative process of continuous learning and adaptation.

Recent studies have explored the role of sensemaking in innovation implementation. Ciasullo *et al.* (2024) illustrated the importance of sensemaking in innovation, focusing on the dynamic interaction between social innovation and resilience through sensemaking within social and economic representations. Annosi *et al.* (2024) highlighted the influence of the institutional context on agile teams' knowledge work and its impact on innovation, stressing the importance of sensemaking in navigating the complexities of modern organizational environments. These insights suggest that sensemaking is crucial for effectively implementing management innovations and shaping how organizations perceive, interpret, and adopt them.

Research on innovation and change initiatives highlights the importance of influencing and managing recipients' sensemaking. Some studies showed that innovators often use rhetoric to introduce new practices (Benders, 1999; Keleman, 2000; Zbaracki, 1998), and they adjust their content and presentation of the new practice to reduce resistance (Meyerson and Scully, 1995; Wickert and de Bakker, 2018). These studies suggest the critical role of strategic communication, which refers to an organization's purposeful use of communication to achieve its mission (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007). Recent research highlights that strategic communication is crucial in change management as it helps reduce resistance to change and promotes innovative behavior among organizational members, essential for achieving organizational innovation (Sung and Kim, 2021; Tann, 2021).

Recent research on technology adoption illustrated that recipients' initial perceptions of the new technology are not static (Rahi and Abd Ghani, 2019; Ye *et al.*, 2023). These findings supported the tenet of expectancy confirmation theory (Oliver, 1980), indicating that a recipient's satisfaction evolves as a function of how well the new technology aligns with initial expectations and perceived performance. Specifically, if the new technology performs better than expected, it results in positive disconfirmation—i.e. the actual performance of the new technology exceeds the recipient's initial expectations (Venkatesh and Goyal, 2010)—and higher satisfaction. Conversely, if it performs worse than expected, it leads to negative disconfirmation, resulting in dissatisfaction. These arguments and findings reflect that recipients' attitudes and understandings evolve as they gather more information and experience the innovation in practice.

Some scholars proposed more interactive perspectives, emphasizing how innovators perceive recipients' feedback and its impact on ongoing processes. Piderit (2000) noted that change agents' interpretation of recipients' reactions can significantly affect the progress of change initiatives, often dismissing constructive feedback as "resistance." More recently, Oreg *et al.* (2018) described a feedback loop where recipients' initial reactions influence innovators, shaping further interactions and ultimately affecting the success of innovation implementation. Recent research has further explored the dynamics of this feedback loop, emphasizing the nuanced roles of change agents in fostering innovation.

As indicated by studies on sensemaking and technology adoption, recipients' perceptions of innovation can change over time with the new information about the innovation, and, therefore, the meaning they attribute to the innovation also evolves. These shifts in meaning can alter the recipients' attitudes and behaviors, and thus, recipients who once accept an innovation may turn to resistance depending on subsequent developments in the innovation. Due to this dynamic nature, innovators need to employ strategic communication to manage recipients' sensemaking processes continuously. While theories of change and innovation underscore the vital role of sensemaking (Klein and Sorra, 1996) and the feedback loop between innovators and recipients (Oreg *et al.*, 2018; Piderit, 2000), empirical studies have underexplored these dynamics. By addressing this issue, our research fills a significant theoretical gap and provides practical insights that can improve innovation management practices. Understanding these reactions can help organizations anticipate and mitigate resistance, leading to more effective and sustainable change processes. Accordingly, this study addressed the following research question:

Research Question. How do innovators perceive and react to employees' evolving responses to management innovation, and how do these perceptions and reactions influence the implementation of management innovation?

To address this research question, this study focuses on a case of innovation in human resource management (HRM innovation). As noted above, this study regards management innovation as the adoption of new management practice that is state-of-the-art or already exists elsewhere but is new to the organization. HRM innovation is a subset of management innovation because it involves significant changes in HRM systems such as performance appraisal, compensation, and human resource development (Volberda *et al.*, 2013).

Research on HRM also emphasized the importance of employees' perceptions (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Gilbert *et al.*, 2011). Kossek (1987) theorized that employees' responses to new HRM practices are influenced by their perceived history of HRM innovation. Drawing from attribution theory (Fiske and Taylor, 1991), Nishii *et al.* (2008) suggested that positively perceived HRM practices lead to favorable attributions, whereas those seen as negative result in unfavorable attributions. Supporting these views, Bondarouk *et al.* (2009) showed how recipients' HRM schemata impact HRM innovation effectiveness. Therefore, a case of HRM innovation is appropriate for the research purpose.

Research background: talent management and Japanese HRM

Since the 2010s, HRM practices focusing on attracting, retaining, and developing employees for key positions have gained attention (Ross, 2013; Silzer and Church, 2009). These HRM practices are referred to as talent management (TM). TM requires a different type of job assignment and human resource development system than those typical in Japanese companies until the 2000s. The subject company is no exception, and its introduction of TM can be regarded as an HRM innovation. This section briefly reviews the literature on TM and trends in HRM in Japanese firms to provide a background for the analysis.

Since the coining of the phrase "War for Talent" by a group of consultants in a McKinsey report (Michaels *et al.*, 2001), TM has gained significant attention in academic and practical realms (Illes *et al.*, 2010; Nijs *et al.*, 2014). While TM has been interpreted and defined variously (Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Dries, 2013; Lewis and Heckman, 2006) and differs in scope across companies (Goldsmith and Carter, 2009), it typically involves talent identification and succession planning for key roles (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013). TM is the process through which employers anticipate and meet their human resource needs, ensuring they have the right people in the right roles to achieve organizational goals.

Specifically, TM involves activities and processes such as attracting, identifying, developing, engaging, retaining, and deploying individuals with high potential who are valuable to the organization (i.e. talent). The major components of TM include:

(1) Systematic definition of key positions that contribute to the organization's competitive advantage,

(2) Identification of the high potential employee to fill the key position (i.e. talent identification), and

(3) Developing a pool of high-performing employees to fill these roles (i.e. talent pool development).

A notable characteristic of TM is that talent identification and talent pool development is based on talent review which is a process of evaluating and selecting talent candidates through discussions involving not only HR members and their immediate supervisors, but also the heads of various departments. Once talent is identified, succession planning is created to place them in future key positions (Joss *et al.*, 2021).

Originally from the US, TM has become a popular HR practice in Europe, Asia, and emerging countries (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016; Pereira *et al.*, 2022). Introducing TM involves systematic processes and activities to improve how the organization attracts, identifies, develops, engages, retains, and deploys high-potential individuals. It entails changes in daily task allocation and human resource development to acquire and develop high-potential workers effectively. Therefore, if TM is a new measure for the company that introduces it, then the introduction of TM can be regarded as an initiative of HRM innovation.

Research has shown that the traditional Japanese HRM system, known for long-term employment, people-oriented recruitment, and seniority-based promotions and pay raises, is markedly different from the US system (Hatvany and Pucik, 1981; Keys and Miller, 1984; Oh, 1976; Pudelko and Harzing, 2007). However, since the 1990s, Japanese HRM has evolved, notably adopting performance-based elements (Keizer, 2010; Lincoln and Nakata, 1997). This shift has led to larger wage disparities and a move towards quicker, sometimes fast-track promotion systems to motivate employees better and advance capable younger staff (Yashiro, 2013). In adopting performance-based HRM, Japanese firms have transformed their grading system to move away from seniority. Traditionally, a capability-based grade system was central to Japanese HRM (Hisamoto, 1994), where salaries for each grade were determined by employee capability, unlike the job-based grade system typical in US firms that bases salary levels within a grade. Thus, their salaries vary by capability grades even when employees have the same jobs. These are defined ambiguously—often in just one sentence—leading to grading not based on detailed assessments. Typically, promotions to higher grades occur with seniority, assuming more extended service implies superior capability. As a result, demotions and pay cuts are rare under this system, and promotions and salary increases tend to be based more on seniority than performance (Gill, 2012).

Many large Japanese firms have adopted a performance-based HRM system alongside a role-based grade system. This system allows employee wages to fluctuate based on their roles, aligning more closely with US HRM practices (Benson and Debroux, 2004). While the spread of this system slowed by the mid-2000s, a new trend emerged with TM, inspired by American HRM models. Due to globalization, a declining birthrate, and an aging population, Japanese companies increasingly value global leadership skills and the ability to attract and retain talent (Schuler *et al.*, 2011; Vaiman *et al.*, 2012). TM has gained popularity because of its focus on performance and talent identification among Japanese firms (Ross, 2013; Silzer and Church, 2009).

Methodology

A single-case study is particularly well-suited for exploring the formulated research question. It facilitates in-depth analysis of intricate phenomena such as sense-making and interpersonal dynamics within HRM innovation processes, providing a detailed understanding within real-life contexts (Yin, 2009; Stake, 1995). This approach is beneficial for investigating phenomena heavily influenced by their organizational settings, where context shapes critical processes and outcomes (Eisenhardt, 1989; Siggelkow, 2007). Although single-case studies may lack generalizability, they provide valuable insights that can be applied to similar contexts (Yin, 2009). The detailed, context-rich findings from the case enhance our understanding of HRM innovation. This study offers insights relevant to this firm and similar dynamics in various organizational settings by clearly outlining the context and mechanisms observed. Thus, the single-case study methodology is justified and valuable for this research. This study examines MKCorp, a pseudonymous Japanese firm that manufactures and sells consumer chemical products. MKCorp employs over 2,000 staff in a major Japanese city and has an HR department with six divisions: HR planning, HR development (HRD), Domestic HR, Global HR, Health Insurance, and Corporate Pension Funds. A specialized team within the HRD, the TM project team (TMPJT), oversees the implementation of TM.

Data collection

To preserve anonymity, MKCorp's initial consideration of TM is dated as 201X. From 201X+2 to 201X+4, various data collection methods were used to ensure depth and accuracy (Table 1). As shown in Table 1, this study used meetings and interviews as the distinct data collection methods. Meetings were conducted as exploratory interactions before defining research questions and in a conversational format without a structured approach and a predetermined agenda. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner using an interview guide, with an emphasis on gathering information relevant to the formulated research questions.

Following the decision to adopt TM, three one-hour meetings were held in early 201X+2 with the TMPJT to discuss HR policies and TM implementation strategies. In May 201X+2, a 2.5-h workshop was conducted involving two TMPJT members, HR professionals from 10 large Japanese firms, and the author, focusing on TM at MKCorp. The discussion highlighted TM as a radical shift from traditional Japanese HRM to a US-style system. The feedback from these HR experts, considered "second opinions," emphasized the complexity and challenges of implementing such a significant change, marking the interactive process as notably intensive compared to incremental innovations.

About six months later, in September 201X+2, the author attended a three-hour HRD meeting at MKCorp to discuss career development and HRD practices, with participation from HRD and TMPJT managers and members. A subsequent two-hour HR meeting in March 201X+3 focused on HRD practices and performance evaluations. These meetings, attended by the author and multiple HRD and TMPJT members, facilitated a deep understanding of MKCorp's HR culture and policies. Insights from these discussions, which generated 80 pages of transcribed text, indicated that MKCorp's HRM system retains many traditional Japanese HRM traits identified by Pudelko and Harzing (2007).

Year and month	Method	Participants
201X+2 January	Meeting	TMPJT manager
February	Meeting	TMPJT manager and TMPJT member A
March	Meeting	TMPJT manager and TMPJT member A
May	Workshop	TMPJT manager, TMPJT member A, and 10 HR practitioners from other 10 firms
September	Participant observation of an HR meeting	HRD manager, TMPJT manager, TMPJT member A, and HRD member X
201X+3 March	Participant observation of an HR meeting	HRD manager, TMPJT manager, TMPJT member A, and HRD member X, Y and Z
July	Interview	HRD manager, TMPJT manager, TMPJT member A
201X+4 May	Interview	TMPJT manager, TMPJT member A, B, and C

Note(s): HRD manager was the leader of the TMPJT
Source(s): Author's own work

Table 1.
Data collection process

Two years after TM's launch (in July 201X+3), the HRD, TM managers, and a TM staff member were interviewed. The main interview topics were:

(1) the structure of the HR department,

(2) the background and sequence of events relating to the adoption of TM and

(3) the detailed TM content and implementation process.

The following year, in May 201X+4, the second interview was conducted with the TMPJT manager, its members, and the HRD managers who were a TMPJT member. These two-hour semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were supplemented by email correspondence. Interviewees detailed the TM implementation events that followed the first interview and discussed their responses to identified TM-related issues. TMPJT members provided additional insights into the TM adoption process. The sessions were recorded, resulting in 54 pages of single-spaced transcribed text.

Company documents were reviewed to support and validate information from observations and interviews. These materials included MKCorp's HRM and HRD policies, an overview of TM, HR department charts, guides on HRD practices, meeting minutes, performance evaluation sheets, talent review results, and succession plans. The meeting minutes helped corroborate interview explanations and offered detailed insights into how recipients responded to the innovation.

At MKCorp, the language used in daily work is primarily Japanese. Therefore, all data was collected through documents, participant observation, and interviews in Japanese. The first draft of this paper was written and fact-checked by informants in Japanese.

Data analysis

The analysis employed a qualitative method, as suggested by Miles *et al.* (2013). This method generally uses two types of coding: open coding and axial coding. In open coding, interview text is repeatedly read to identify "codes," representing essential thoughts, ideas, attitudes, and subjects. After open coding, axial coding is applied to find relationships between the codes. This involves aggregating codes into higher-level categories. The goal is to understand the interconnectedness of themes and concepts within the data.

In this study, as the initial step of the analysis, notes from the first interview were reviewed and reorganized chronologically. Although coding was not performed at this stage, preliminary analyses and fact-checking questions were noted. The interviewees then validated edited transcripts and memos. This process was repeated after the second interview, culminating in a merged transcript.

After reviewing the merged transcript, the data underwent a first-order analysis and were coded. This process identified TMPJT members as innovators and executive directors as recipients. The coding highlighted innovators' behaviors, perceptions of recipients' reactions, and contextual factors affecting TM adoption. These initial codes were compared with existing theories and literature, leading to refinements and integration into more abstract codes. This iterative comparison and integration culminated in the development of an abstract model. The Appendix details how the data were categorized into first-order concepts during the first-order coding.

The data analyzed in this study is a series of events related to management innovation over several years and the interactions between actors during that period. To better understand the sequence of events and their impacts, this study employed a temporal bracketing strategy, which breaks down a long period into smaller, more manageable period (Langley, 1999). Previous studies used this strategy to examine how initial conditions and actions evolve over time (e.g. Denis, 1996).

Findings

In the first-order analysis, the TM introduction and implementation process was split into several phases using a temporal bracketing strategy. The division was based on major decision-making and the initiation of TM initiatives. The analysis identified five phases: (1) a consideration of TM, (2) TM design, (3) announcement and persuasion, (4) experimental implementation, and (5) official TM implementation (Table 2). Then, the narratives in the data were divided into these five phases. Each phase represents a significant shift in the process, making it easier to analyze how it evolves and what factors influence these changes.

These five stages seem to be organized as a linear process in terms of chronological order, where events and stages are presented one after the other in a specific sequence over time. However, it can be regarded as a recursive process in terms of innovation implementation, where interactions between innovators and recipients involve ongoing cycles of feedback and adaptation, continuously influencing each other and evolving over time (Cloutier and Langley, 2020).

In this section, the process of HRM innovation in MKCorp is discussed and clarified.

Phase 1: considering TM

In March 201X, the HR director highlighted the need for more employee information, lamenting the inability to track employee locations and roles. He advocated for better visualization of employee data, noting that information was not shared with executives but siloed within individual units and thus, not accessible to executives or the HR department.

Therefore, despite regular personnel transfers at MKCorp, these moves often met only each unit's immediate and sometimes suboptimal needs without offering employees developmental opportunities. The HR directors and HRM members attributed their inability to implement such developmental transfers primarily to the department's lack of sufficient employee information.

Accordingly, the HR director argued that TM could facilitate the sharing of employee information across units, a suggestion that gained broad agreement within the HR department (March 201X). Subsequently, the HR department proposed TM to the CEO, who officially approved it. The TM manager added:

Phase	Year and month	Events
Phase 1: Consideration of TM	201X March May	- Started consideration of adopting TM - CEO approved the adoption of TM
Phase 2: TM Design	201X July	- TMPJT was established
Phase 3: Announcement and persuasion	201X October	- Announcement of TM adoption and implementation - Backstage negotiation
Phase 4: Experimental implementation	201X+1 May June July November	- The experimental TM implementation was Announced - The experimental review was started - Executives and HR meeting (Discussion of review and succession plan) - Executives and HR meeting (Discussion of review and succession plan)
Phase 5: Official TM implementation	201X+2 May	- TM was officially introduced

Source(s): Author's own work

Table 2. Phases of HRM innovation in MKCorp

> The HR director suggested we not simply "copy" other firms' TM strategies but start with talent reviews and then create succession plans for key positions (TM manager).

Interviewees frequently mentioned "visualize human resources" and "developmental transfer" as critical functions of TM, highlighting its main goal: facilitating developmental personnel transfers, such as stretch assignments for high-potential employees based on their development plans. The findings indicate that this HRM innovation was driven not by institutional pressure (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996) or management fashion (Abrahamson, 1991) but as a strategy to gain competitive advantage through developmental transfers.

A system called "Personnel Committee" was already in place for selecting and grooming executive candidates. However, within this system, there are no common criteria for selecting successors, and therefore, executive directors selected their successors based on personal criteria. Moreover, the committee holds only a three-day lecture as a candidate development program. As noted by TMPJT member B, the program "had no impact on personnel transfers." Therefore, HR department members saw the need to reform the personnel committee to make it a more effective tool for selecting and developing executive candidates.

At the start of this phase, MKCorp had been refining its HRM system for over a decade. By the late 1990s, the company had shifted to a performance-based wage system but maintained a capability-based grade system, keeping wage and promotion processes seniority-based. In January 201X, MKCorp replaced this with a role-based grade system, allowing managers to allocate human resources without considering tenure or age. These changes aligned with the introduction of TM and aimed to move away from seniority-based practices.

Innovators believed that employees' familiarity with the Personnel Committee and the new role-based grade system would help ease the acceptance of TM.

> We thought the experience of the personnel committee could enhance the recipients' readiness for TM (TM staff member C)

> We thought of a role-based grade system as a groundwork for effective TM implementation. (TM staff member B)

They viewed these changes as incremental, which they thought would increase the likelihood of acceptance, a perspective reflected in their statements.

Two months later (in May 201X), the HR director proposed the adoption of TM to the CEO, who approved the proposal. Figure 1 shows the results of the first-order analysis.

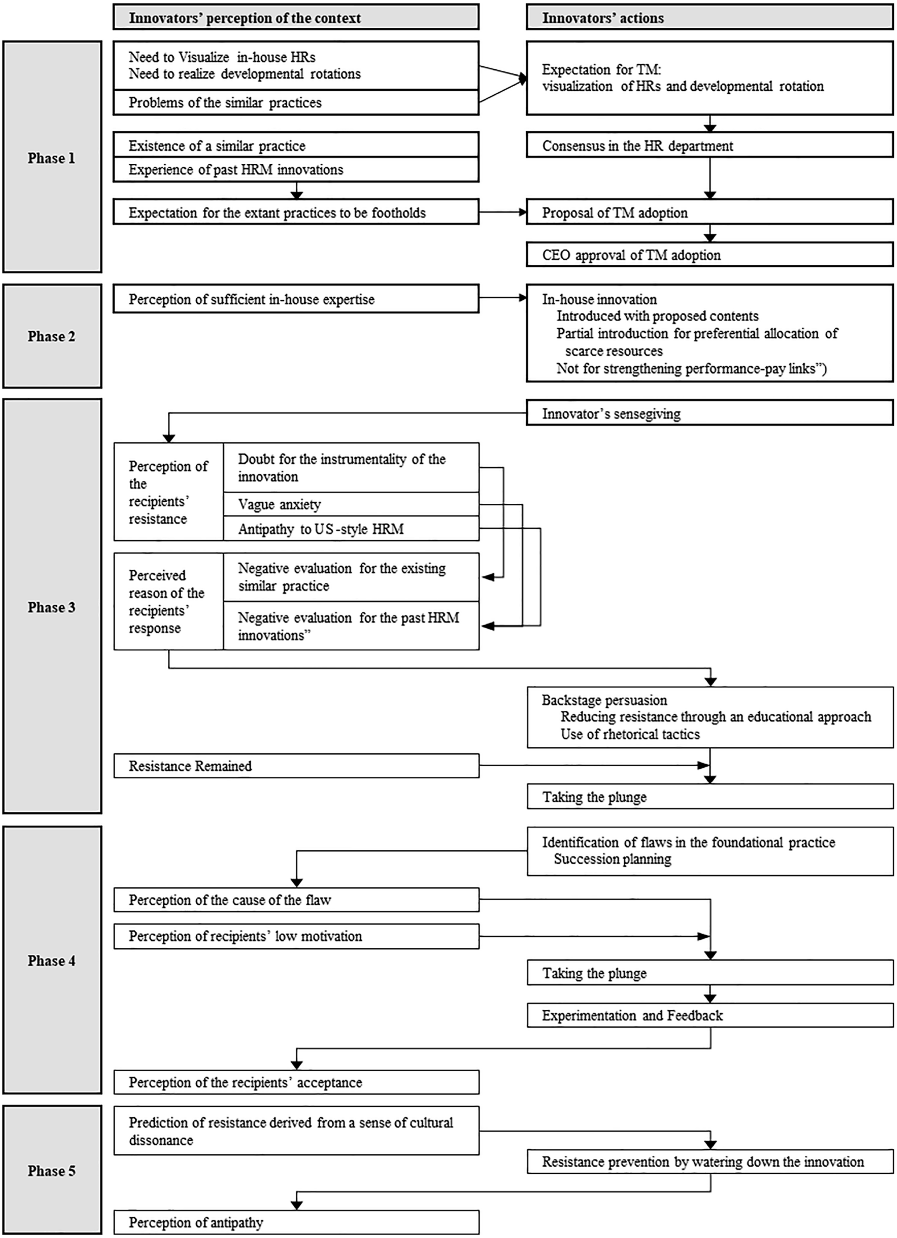
Phase 2: TM design

After receiving CEO approval in July 201X, the TMPJT was formed, consisting of the HR director, the HRD manager, TMPJT manager, and TM members A, B, and C. MKCorp chose not to hire external consultants, relying instead on the team's prior experience with TM in other companies, believing it has sufficient in-house expertise.

The TMPJT implemented talent reviews, talent pool development, and succession planning as per the initial proposal. The team maintained these TM practices' original scope and content throughout this phase. The TMPJT decided to limit talent reviews and succession planning to senior-level employees, acknowledging the need for these practices but citing time and effort constraints as reasons to focus on top-tier staff. These TM practices did not increase wage disparities or strengthen the link between individual performance and wages (Phase 2 in Figure 1).

Phase 3: announcement and persuasion

In October 201X, during a meeting with the CEO and other executives, TMPJT announced the adoption of TM at MKCorp as an experimental initiative. This required executives to



Source(s): Author's own work

Figure 1.
Result of the first-order analysis

identify successors and create developmental plans for them. In their proposal to the executives, TMPJT positioned talent discovery and development as the purposes of TM. As measures to achieve these purposes, TMPJT utilized "visualizing human resources" and "succession planning" as keywords to make executives perceive the effectiveness of TM.

However, two-thirds of the executives hesitated to engage in these practices, which TMPJT perceived as showing resistance to the initiative. The interviewees further detailed the responses of these executives:

> We explained our goal of developmental transfer, but some executives dismissed TM as useless. (TMPJT member B)

> A resistant executive said, "Do you think that TM enables us to implement developmental personnel transfers?" (TMPJT manager)

These statements indicate that some executives doubted the effectiveness of TM, a sentiment captured by the TMPJT. Despite using "visualize human resources" as a key phrase, it failed to enhance TM's appeal for many executives. According to meeting minutes, the TM manager and members reported that some executives dismissed TM as ineffective, likening it to the ineffective Personnel Committee. These reactions from the executives were unexpected for the TMPJT. Since some executives used the failure of the Personnel Committee as a counterargument, the TMPJT thought that negative past experiences with the Personnel Committee led these executives to view TM skeptically as merely "old wine in a new bottle".

TMPJT members also perceived anxiety and antipathy demonstrated by some of the executives toward TM:

> The executives had not experienced a practice like talent review. I think they felt, "What is going on?"(TM manager)

> Being confronted with an unfamiliar practice, they might feel a sense of anxiety. They might think, "What is about to start?" (TM staff member A)

Another TMPJT member speculated that some executives might view the adoption of TM as "importing US HRM". "Perhaps their anxiety and antipathy stem from fearing a competitive environment typical of American firms. They are aware that several Japanese firms have unsuccessfully tried to implement US-style HRM systems," explained TMPJT member B. TMPJT members noted that executives primarily responded to TM with skepticism about its usefulness, vague anxiety, and aversion to US-style HRM. These perceptions of TMPJT are based more on inferences drawn from past interactions with the executives than on their official statements.

Based on these executives' explicit and implicit—and inferred—reactions, TMPJT changed its approach to get the executives to accept TM. TMPJT members felt it crucial to educate executives on TM's purpose and its differences from current practices to reduce resistance. Additionally, they aimed to alleviate executives' anxiety and aversion by presenting TM more favorably. Therefore, TMPJT members visited each executive's office multiple times to clarify and promote the benefits of TM. The TM manager commented:

> We explained TM's aims and significance. Initially, most executives were skeptical, asking, "Why do I have to do this? It's meaningless." However, persistent visits eventually secured their cooperation. (TM manager)

To mitigate resistance to TM, the TMPJT members used rhetorical tactics, carefully selecting words and phrases for use in various materials.

> We deleted loan words in the materials. Initially, the sentences contained many English words. We translated them into Japanese to reduce the executives' sense of resistance (TMPJT member B).

In Japan, loan words are frequently used in business as technical terms. TMPJT member C noted that in MKCorp and other Japanese firms, these loan words can seem pretentious or superficial. Consequently, TMPJT members removed English terms from their materials, opting for Japanese words and phrases more familiar to the executives.

In this way, in response to the executives' unfavorable reaction, TMPJT employed more detailed communication tactics (e.g. one-on-one discussions) and rhetorical strategies to ensure that the executives would evaluate TM favorably. Despite these strategies, some executives still resisted or were cynical about TM. Given this persistent resistance, TMPJT members concluded that further persuasive communication would not be effective. They decided to continue with TM adoption and implementation, anticipating that executives would recognize its benefits through experience (Phase 3 in Figure 1).

Phase 4: experimental implementation

TM at MKCorp started as an experimental initiative in June 201X+1, where executives needed to identify their successors and those of their direct reports, including divisional and subsidiary managers, and create succession plans. However, the TMPJT found that the talent reviews and succession plans provided by the executives could have been better. Many selections lacked clear justification, and the plans were vaguely described, identifying significant flaws in the foundational practice of succession planning. The TM manager noted these issues as follows:

> They seemed to select their candidates by their likes and dislikes. . . . Most of the succession plans said nothing about the developmental experiences. (TM manager)

Investigating the poorly written succession plans, TMPJT contemplated the reasons behind this inadequacy. As a result, TMPJT members concluded that vague job descriptions for division managers hindered executives' ability to create specific development plans. These job descriptions had already been used at MKCorp before the introduction of TM was considered (i.e. prior to this HR innovation). Many TMPJT members were involved as HR personnel in creating these job descriptions and were, therefore, well aware of the circumstances at that time.

These job descriptions were created by division managers when MKCorp implemented a role-based HR system prior to TM. The introduction of the role-based HR system was also a significant HR innovation for MKCorp at that time. Therefore, the job descriptions were created participatively to minimize resistance from the executives. Specifically, instead of HR conducting job analyses, division managers, who were direct subordinates of the executives, created their job descriptions, which the executives then approved.

However, the job descriptions created by managers did not meet the HR department's expectations. MKCorp's HRM traditionally focused on assigning tasks to people rather than fitting people into specific jobs, reflecting a more traditional Japanese approach than the US style. The TM manager noted, "Managers might be unable to imagine describing a job." TMPJT member A suggested this issue stemmed from managers' limited understanding of job descriptions.

> They wrote only minimum requirements such as years of experience, educational background, and so on. . . . They were far from what a job description should be! (TMPJT member A)

TMPJT believed that for executives to formulate succession plans effectively, they needed to deepen their understanding of the job descriptions and, through this understanding, improve their comprehension and motivation for succession planning. However, through the interactions up to this point, TMPJT members sensed that the executives had low motivation for succession planning. Thus, TMPJT feared forcing executives to revise the job descriptions would further increase their resistance.

Consequently, they chose not to revise job descriptions and continued with the experimental TM process. They anticipated that executives would gradually understand the job descriptions and the TM process through direct experience. As the TM manager stated:

> Ultimately, we believed that "learning by doing" would be more effective than simply explaining job descriptions and TM. (TM manager)

After the first experimental review was completed, the CEO held a meeting in July 20XX+1, where the participants—the CEO, executive directors, HR director, and the TMPJT team—discussed the succession plans. The directors subsequently revised the talent review and succession plans. Four months later, in November 20XX+1, the CEO held another meeting with the same participants to discuss the revised succession plans.

The directors' attitudes had changed through their engagement in this process. The minutes of the second meeting revealed that most directors made favorable comments like "TM is fair because we evaluate candidates from diverse perspectives" or "TM enables us to evaluate employees objectively." TMPJT members noted that executives grew more favorable towards TM as they understood its purpose and effectiveness through their involvement. As a TMPJT member observed:

> Before the experiment, they viewed TM as mysterious, but I believe their anxieties lessened through experience. (TMPJT member A)

In the same vein, the TM manager observed:

> Many executives commented, "Doing made me understand its purpose and meaningful effects." (TM manager)

Perceiving a positive turn in the executive's attitude toward TM, TMPJT increased its expectations for the success of TM and proposed the formal implementation of TM to the CEO. After the experimental review concluded in May 201X+2, TM was officially launched within the company (Phase 4 in Figure 1).

Phase 5: official TM implementation

"Linked personnel transfers," for example, in cases where it became necessary to replace the incumbent financial manager by a talented individual to resolve an urgent issue, impeded developmental personnel transfers. Before the introduction of the role-based grade system and TM, such replacements were difficult to accomplish because demotion was not permitted. However, under the current HRM system, the incumbent financial manager can be demoted to a lower position, and a more appropriate person for the job can be promoted or newly hired.

Three years after the experimental review, MKCorp nearly achieved "visualization of human resources." However, by May 201X+4, only 60% of senior-level employee transfers aligned with talent review outcomes and succession plans, a result both the CEO and TMPJT members considered "worse than expected." This lower-than-expected outcome was due to the HRD department's misjudgment in anticipating and responding to the recipients' reactions to the implementation of TM.

"Linked personnel transfers" is an HR practice that could impede developmental transfers. This practice had existed at MKCorp since before the TM introduction. For example, suppose a case in which replacing the incumbent financial manager with a more suitable person to resolve an urgent issue became necessary. Previously, such demotions were not allowed in the HRD system, but introducing a role-based grading system and TM made such personnel replacements possible. Under the current HRM system, the incumbent financial manager can be demoted to a lower position, and the successor for the job can be promoted or newly hired.

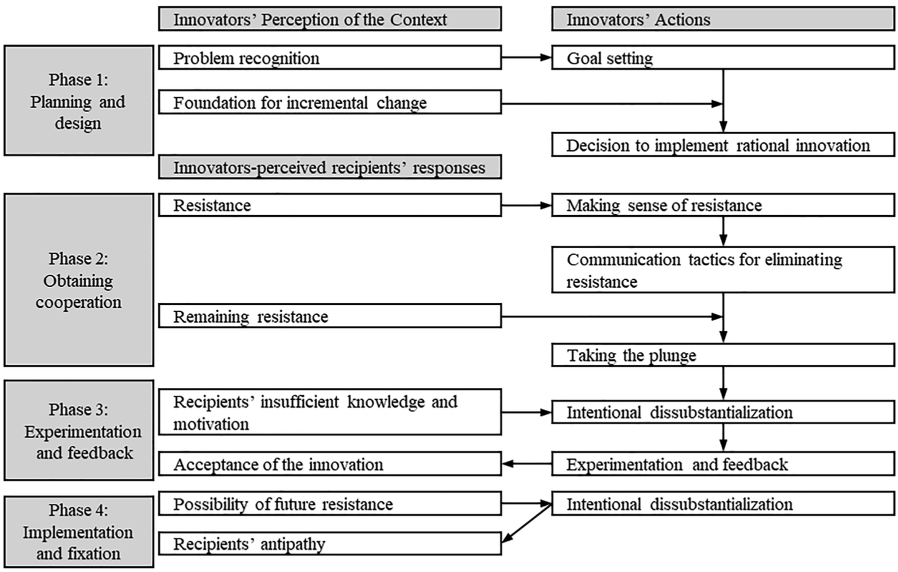
Nevertheless, the HRD department continued to apply the traditional linked personnel transfer even after the implementation of TM. A financial manager was transferred horizontally to another management position at the same level (i.e. as an accounting manager) rather than being demoted or dismissed. Even if the successor within the accounting division who has been identified through a talent review is better qualified, the horizontal transfer of the ex-financial manager is prioritized, and the promotion of the successor is delayed. The HRD department continued using linked personnel transfer as a face-saving measure (cf. Goffman, 1955; Ho, 1976) because it was concerned that the demotion of employees would cause backlash and uneasiness among them.

> We technically can demote him, but realistically, we cannot risk him losing face, as it would negatively impact his family's living conditions and might lead other employees to resent HR and the HRM system. We must consider these cultural factors. (HRD manager)

The HRD manager indicated that HR uses linked personnel transfers to preempt employee resistance. However, this approach not only hindered developmental transfers, but also aroused condemnation from executives who were forming positive attitudes toward TM. The HR department faced criticisms from executives and managers, with comments like "nothing has changed from before the TM" and "we had put in so much effort, but TM is meaningless". The approach taken by the HRD department, which was on the reform side, to prevent resistance from the recipients, hindered change and even created a new backlash from the recipients (Phase 5 in Figure 1).

Summary of the findings

The initial analysis results were abstracted through frequent iterations between data and theory (Figure 2). The first two phases were combined to form a four-phase model.



Source(s): Author's own work

Figure 2. Result of the second-order analysis

In Phase 1, innovators expected that recipients' familiarity with similar HR practices would foster acceptance of the new HRM innovation. However, recipients' skepticism was evident as they negatively evaluated the innovation based on past experiences with similar practices, aligning with Kossek's (1987) theory. Innovators realized that the context influenced recipients' attitudes. Although recipients did not oppose the innovation's core objective, innovators misinterpreted their hesitancy as anxiety toward unfamiliar practices and resistance due to cultural dissonance. Innovators used rhetorical tactics and continuous communication to promote a favorable view of the innovation.

In Phase 2, innovators' rhetorical tactics failed to change recipients' resistant attitudes. Despite their efforts, the negative image formed by past HR practices persisted. Innovators proceeded with the innovation, expecting recipients to change their attitudes through direct experience. Then, in Phase 3, innovators prioritized advancing the innovation, believing firsthand involvement would be more persuasive than educational methods. This approach succeeded, leading to widespread acceptance among recipients.

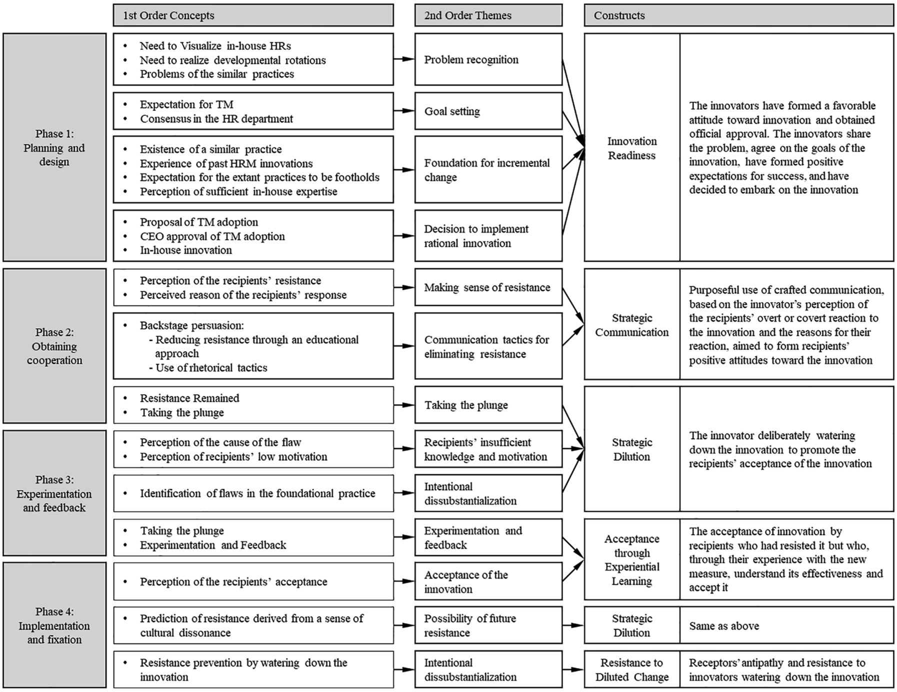
However, innovators anticipated backlash if they implemented innovations in their original form, so they ossified some aspects (e.g. continuing to use linked personnel transfer). Ironically, this led to criticism from the recipients, turning the innovators into a resistant force. Innovators mistakenly perceived ongoing resistance from recipients, even though the recipients shifted towards positive expectations of innovation. This misjudgment led to recipient disappointment, highlighting the importance of recognizing changes in recipients' perceptions.

As the final analysis, following Gioia *et al.* (2013), a data structure table was created to extract more abstract concepts from the themes identified in the second-order analysis (Figure 3). Initially, the innovators formed readiness for the innovation through problem recognition, goal setting, consensus building, a sense of efficacy towards success, and obtaining official approval. Then, the innovators engaged in strategic communication, purposefully crafting communication based on their sensemaking of the recipients' resistance to form the recipients' favorable attitudes toward the innovation. Besides, to reduce resistance, the innovators tried to make the innovation more incremental through strategic dilution, deliberately watering down some aspects. After the innovation was implemented, the recipients developed positive attitudes through experiential learning, while the innovators engaged in further strategic dilution to prevent future resistance. However, this post-implementation strategic dilution resulted in antipathy from the recipients due to the misperception of their attitudes changing.

The case analysis above describes a feedback loop between innovators and adopters in innovation. Recipients' perceptions are influenced by past experiences and context, not just the innovation itself. Innovators can shape these views through strategic communication and must adapt based on recipients' evolving perceptions. This adaptability and understanding of feedback loops are crucial for successful innovation. These observations provide us with novel insights regarding the role of sensemaking and strategic communication in management innovation. Specifically:

(1) The enactment-selection-retention loop should incorporate the interactive dynamics between stakeholders, such as innovators and recipients, recognizing that their actions and perceptions mutually influence each other.

(2) Past experiences with similar innovations and broader contextual factors significantly influence recipients' perceptions and interpretations, which should be considered in the selection and retention phases to understand and predict responses to innovations.



Source(s): Author's own work

Figure 3.
Data structure: result of analyses

(3) Effective strategic communication by innovators plays a crucial role in shaping recipients' perceptions and interpretations during the enactment phase, influencing subsequent selection and retention processes.

(4) Strategic communication and incremental innovation through strategic dilution are not always successful. Innovators need to continuously adapt their strategies based on feedback from recipients, demonstrating a high level of responsiveness and flexibility in the enactment, selection, and retention phases.

As discussed in the next section, these insights can provide new value to management innovation theory and deepen our knowledge of management innovation practices.

Discussion

Implementing management innovation within large organizations is a multifaceted process influenced by a complex interplay of cultural, structural, and strategic factors. This study explored the dynamics of adopting such innovations, using the case of HRM innovation within a large Japanese firm as an illustrative example. The findings reveal a multi-phase process characterized by initial resistance, gradual acceptance, and ongoing challenges by focusing on how innovators perceive and react to employees' evolving responses to management innovation.

The significant contribution of this study lies in highlighting the evolving nature of employees' perceptions towards management innovation. It demonstrates how these perceptions can be shaped and transformed through strategic communication and experiential learning, ultimately affecting the acceptance and penetration of the innovation. By documenting the mechanisms of strategic communication, this study provides valuable insights into how innovators can effectively manage and respond to the changing attitudes of employees during the innovation process.

This discussion delves into these findings' theoretical and practical implications, shedding light on the nuanced role of strategic communication and sensemaking in innovation implementation. Additionally, it addresses the study's limitations and proposes directions for future research to build upon the insights gained.

Theoretical implications

The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the feedback loop between innovators and adopters in innovation, emphasizing the critical role of sensemaking and strategic communication. Recipients' perceptions are shaped by their past experiences and context, not merely by the innovation itself. Innovators can influence these perceptions through strategic communication and must adapt based on recipients' evolving responses. This adaptability and understanding of feedback loops are crucial for successful innovation. The feedback loop is characterized as continuous interaction, negotiation, and adaptation, emphasizing that the innovation process is not a unidirectional influence or one-off interaction. This dynamic interaction is crucial for the acceptance and penetration of management innovations.

Klein and Sorra's (1996) theory emphasizes the fit between organizational climate and employee values in the success of management innovations, highlighting the need to foster an innovation-oriented climate. In contrast, the current study focuses on managing resistance, assuming that employees will resist innovations if they perceive the innovation as unfavorable, regardless of the organizational climate. Specifically, this study emphasizes the significance of deploying resistance management strategies as feedback loops in response to potential or manifested recipient reactions. Innovators manage the meaning of the innovation through strategic communication and attempt to mitigate resistance by emphasizing the incremental nature of the innovation through strategic dilution. However, strategic dilution carries the risk of backlash unless innovators accurately capture recipients' expectations formed through prior experiences and the innovation process. This study emphasizes the innovators' direct influence on recipients' perceptions to foster a positive attitude toward change. This is in addition to Klein and Sorra's tenet of creating a favorable organizational environment. This distinction indicates different approaches to the success of innovation implementation, suggesting that combining both can create a more comprehensive implementation strategy.

The enactment-selection-retention loop should incorporate the interactive dynamics between stakeholders, recognizing that their actions and perceptions mutually influence each other. Effective strategic communication by innovators is essential in shaping recipients' perceptions and interpretations during the enactment phase, affecting subsequent selection and retention processes. Innovators need to demonstrate high responsiveness and flexibility, continuously adapting their strategies based on feedback from recipients.

Past experiences with similar innovations and broader contextual factors significantly influence recipients' perceptions and interpretations. These factors should be considered in the selection and retention phases to understand and predict responses to innovations. Klein and Sorra's (1996) theory supports this by emphasizing the importance of the fit between innovation and recipient values and the organization's capacity to support them. However, this analysis builds on their theory by highlighting the practical challenges of managing recipient perceptions and the dynamic, interactive nature of the innovation process.

The case analysis also illustrated that the evolving nature of innovation recipients' perceptions is influenced by strategic communication and experiential learning. As Klein and Sorra's (1996) theory recognizes the need for strategic communication, this study extends it by exploring specific communication methods, including educational techniques, persuasion, and appropriate language use. Furthermore, the study illustrates the impact of innovators' sensitivity to and understanding of culture and context, forming part of political savvy or political skill (Ferris *et al.*, 2007; Qian *et al.*, 2020). This suggests that strategic communication can also be political tactics involving reading context, considering stakeholder interests and feelings, and bargaining.

Focusing on the evolving nature of perception is particularly important for management innovation. While technological innovation results in tangible products and processes that can be objectively measured, management innovation involves changes in organizational practices, processes, and structures, which are more abstract and subjective. Thus, the outcomes of management innovation are difficult to quantify, involving intangible benefits such as improved leadership styles, decision-making processes, and organizational culture. Therefore, it is critical to emphasize the evolutionary nature of perception and promotion through strategic communication in management innovation.

In summary, this integrated analysis highlights the importance of interactive dynamics, strategic communication, and the evolving nature of perceptions in the innovation process. Understanding and leveraging these factors through continuous feedback loops and political processes is essential for successfully implementing and accepting management innovations.

Practical implications

This study provides practical implications for organizations aiming to innovate their management practices. This is especially relevant for organizational leaders, and change agents dealing with the complexities of adopting and implementing management innovations. A key practical implication is the critical role of strategic communication and education in driving management innovation. The findings highlight the necessity for innovators to maintain open, transparent discussions with employees about the goals, processes, and anticipated results of the innovation. Organizations need to prioritize developing detailed communication strategies that tackle potential concerns and misconceptions, using relatable language and examples. Additionally, educational efforts that help employees see how the innovation benefits their work and personal growth can reduce resistance and create a more accepting environment.

Moreover, the findings demonstrate the effectiveness of experiential learning in reducing skepticism and resistance toward management innovations. Organizations can benefit from setting up pilot programs or experimental phases, allowing employees to interact with new practices in a supportive setting. This hands-on experience helps recipients understand and appreciate the innovation's value. Additionally, organizations should consider implementing feedback mechanisms during these phases to gather recipient insights and further improve the innovation process. Establishing formal and informal feedback channels allows innovators to identify resistance, misunderstandings, or practical challenges promptly. This proactive approach improves the innovation's relevance and effectiveness and shows recipients that their input is valued, promoting a collaborative and respectful workplace culture.

Strength, limitations, and future research

This study has several strengths. First, it used longitudinal data collection to track the innovation implementation process and gain insights into the context. Second, it employed multiple methods, such as participant observation and textual analysis. Participant observation provided a deep understanding of the innovators' perspectives and the context, while textual analysis yielded detailed information about innovation practice and recipients' responses.

However, like all research, this study has limitations that highlight areas for future research. The main limitation of this study is its reliance on a single-case study design. While the detailed examination of TM implementation at MKCorp provides valuable insights, the findings may not broadly apply to other settings. Variations in organizational cultures, industries, and national contexts could introduce unique challenges and opportunities for management innovation, requiring careful consideration when generalizing these results. Besides, HRM innovations possess distinct characteristics from management innovations in other domains. For example, compared to innovations in operations management, HRM innovations less frequently involve technological changes to perform daily tasks. Instead, HRM innovations can directly impact recipients' careers and may have immediate effects on their compensation. The generalizability of the current findings to other domains is yet to be examined. Future research can explore comparative case studies across various organizational contexts, industries, and cultures.

Additionally, this research mainly focuses on the innovators' perspectives, possibly neglecting the detailed views and experiences of the broader recipient base. Further research should investigate management innovation from the recipients' viewpoints, examining their perceptions, attitudes, and responses to changes. Understanding how recipients interpret these innovations and what factors promote or hinder their acceptance will provide a more comprehensive view of the innovation process. This could also help identify strategies to boost recipient engagement and participation.

Moreover, future studies could further dissect the roles of leadership styles and communication strategies in facilitating management innovation. Investigating the impact of different leadership approaches and communication tactics on innovation acceptance and integration could offer practical guidelines for organizations.

Conclusion

This study provides critical insights into the challenges of implementing management innovation. It highlights the crucial roles of strategic communication, cultural sensitivity, and managing recipient perceptions and feedback. The process involves overcoming initial resistance and employing strategic persuasion, showing the importance of innovators in managing this complex environment. While some successes were noted, cultural and structural barriers still need to be addressed to realize innovation objectives fully. This research enhances theoretical understanding and offers practical insights, emphasizing the need for a proactive and adaptive change management approach that considers organizational culture and dynamics. Future studies should include comparative and cross-cultural research to expand understanding and confirm these findings in various settings.

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Appendix

	Empirical data	1st order concepts
Phase 1: Planning and design	The HR director highlighted the need for more employee information, lamenting the inability to track employee locations and roles. He advocated for better visualization of employee data, noting that information was not shared with executives but siloed within individual units and thus, not accessible to executives or the HR department	Need to Visualize in-house HRs
	The HR directors and HRM members attributed their inability to implement such developmental transfers primarily to the department's lack of sufficient employee information	Need to realize developmental rotations
	A system called "Personnel Committee" was already in place for selecting and grooming executive candidates. . . . As noted by TMJPT member B, the program "had no impact on personnel transfers."	Problems of the similar practices
	The HR director argued that TM could facilitate the sharing of employee information across units	Expectation for TM
	The HR director argued that . . . gained broad agreement within the HR department	Consensus in the HR department
	A system called "Personnel Committee" was already in place for selecting and grooming executive candidates	Existence of a similar practice
	MKCorp replaced this with a role-based grade system, allowing managers to allocate human resources without considering tenure or age. These changes aligned with the introduction of TM and aimed to move away from seniority-based practices	Experience of past HRM innovations
	They (innovators) viewed these changes as incremental, which they thought would increase the likelihood of acceptance, a perspective reflected in their statements	Expectation for the extant practices to be footholds
	MKCorp chose not to hire external consultants, relying instead on the team's prior experience with TM in other companies, believing it has sufficient in-house expertise	Perception of sufficient in-house expertise
	The HR department proposed TM to the CEO, . . .	Proposal of TM adoption
	The HR department proposed TM to the CEO, who officially approved it	CEO approval of TM adoption
	MKCorp chose not to hire external consultants, relying instead on the team's prior experience with TM in other companies . . .	In-house innovation

(*continued*)

Table A1. Categorization of empirical data into first-order concepts

	Empirical data	1st order concepts
Phase 2: Obtaining cooperation	Two-thirds of the executives hesitated to engage in these practices, which TMJPT perceived as showing resistance to the initiative	Perception of the recipients' resistance
	Since some executives used the failure of the Personnel Committee as a counterargument, the TMJPT thought that negative past experiences with the Personnel Committee led these executives to view TM skeptically as merely "old wine in a new bottle"	Perceived reason of the recipients' response
	They (TMJPT members) aimed to alleviate executives' anxiety and aversion by presenting the TM more favorably. Therefore, TMJPT members visited each executive's office multiple times to clarify and promote the benefits of TM	Backstage persuasion: - Reducing resistance through an educational approach - Use of rhetorical tactics
	In response to the executives' unfavorable reaction, TMJPT . . . Despite these strategies, some executives still resisted or were cynical about TM (coded as "resistance remained")	Resistance Remained
	They (TMJPT members) decided to continue with TM adoption and implementation, anticipating that executives would recognize its benefits through experience	Taking the plunge
Phase 3: Experimentation and feedback	The TM manager noted, "Managers might be unable to imagine describing a job." TMJPT member A suggested this issue stemmed from managers' limited understanding of job descriptions	Perception of the cause of the flaw
	Through the interactions up to this point, TMJPT members sensed that the executives had low motivation for succession planning	Perception of recipients' low motivation
	TMJPT found that the talent reviews and succession plans provided by the executives could have been better. Many selections lacked clear justification, and the plans were vaguely described, identifying significant flaws in the foundational practice of succession planning	Identification of flaws in the foundational practice
	TMJPT feared forcing executives to revise the job descriptions would further increase their resistance. Consequently, they chose not to revise job descriptions and continued with the experimental TM process	Taking the plunge
	After the first experimental review was completed, the CEO held a meeting . . . discussed the succession plans. The directors subsequently revised the talent review . . . the CEO held another meeting with the same participants to discuss the revised succession plans	Experimentation and Feedback

Table A1. (*continued*)

	Empirical data	1st order concepts
Phase 4: Implementation and fixation	The directors' attitudes had changed through their engagement in this process . . . TMJPT members noted that executives grew more favorable towards TM as they understood its purpose and effectiveness through their involvement	Perception of the recipients' acceptance
	"We technically can demote him, but realistically, we cannot risk him losing face, as it would negatively impact his family's living conditions and might lead other employees to resent HR and the HRM system. We must consider these cultural factors."	Prediction of resistance derived from a sense of cultural dissonance
	The HRD manager indicated that HR used linked personnel transfers to preempt employee resistance	Resistance prevention by watering down the innovation

Note(s): All empirical data are included in the main text. All sentences have been capitalized at the beginning. Additionally, pronouns have been supplemented with specific subjects in parentheses. For lengthy sentences, parts have been omitted using ellipses
Source(s): Author's own work

Table A1.

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