UNIT-22 MANAGING CHANGE AT THE WORKPLACE

Structure

22.0 LEARNING OUTCOME

After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- Understand change and its effect on organisations and people;

- Explain the major causes for resistance to change and it can be avoided; and

- Discuss managerial actions for change management.

22.1 INTRODUCTION

All organisations whether public or private, face a dynamic and changing environment today. This is necessitating organisations to adapt to change. Change within an organisation calls for a modification of the relationships, responsibilities, and behaviour of individuals in the organisation. While not every change may require significant adjustment, change is the rallying cry among today's managers worldwide, and is a daily event in most work environments. To illustrate the variety of change, technology is changing jobs and organisations. The substitution of computer control for direct supervision, for example, is resulting in wider spans of control for managers. Indeed every member of the organisation is affected by changes in all the human resource management as well as by innovations introduced by the manager. It is the function of the manager to work with each subordinate to obtain acceptance of new directions and commitment to change.

People want change at the workplace for:

(i)   better methods of work;

(ii)   improved job;

(iii)   less control;

(iv)   higher outputs and profit;

(v)   change in the attitude of higher management;

(vi)   securing stability in the organisation; and

(vii)   increased individual satisfaction and social well–being.

For Stephens Robbins, (2001) 'change' refers to making things different. What distinguishes 'planned change' from 'routine change' is its scope and magnitude. Planned change is "the deliberate design and implementation of a structural innovation, a new policy or goal, or a change in operating philosophy, climate or style.

22.2 CAUSES OR FORCES FOR CHANGE

Stephen Robbins summarises six specific forces that are acting as stimulants for change:

FORCES FOR CHANGE

S.No.	Force	Examples
1.	Nature of the workforce	• More cultural diversity • Increase in professionals • Many new entrants with inadequate skills
2.	Technology	• Faster and cheaper computers • TQM programs • Reengineering programs
3.	Economic shocks	• Asian real estate collapse • Russian devaluation of the ruble • Changes in oil prices
4.	Competition	• Global competitors • Mergers and consolidations • Growth of e-commerce
5.	Social trends	• Attitude toward smokers • Delayed marriages by young people • Popularity of sport-utility vehicles
6.	World politics	• Collapse of Soviet Union • Opening of markets in China • Black rule of South Africa

This is not a definitive list but it should give the idea of the diversity of pressures that can cause change.

1.   Economic conditions have continued to factors imposing changes on organisations. Developments in India between 1999 and 2003 made organisations realise how vulnerable markets can be to inflow and outflow of

capital. This pressure forced organisations to examine closely what they were doing in order to be able to compete in export markets.

2.   Whether at home or abroad, all organisations face some competition. Heightened competition means that established organisations need to defend themselves against both traditional competitors that develop new products and services, and small entrepreneurial firms with innovative offerings.

3.   Further, it should also be realised that government policy can be impacted on a local, national and international basis. The impact that politics has on organisations by way of local or European legislation is well known.

4.   Technological change has greatly affected the way organisations operate and communicate. Sophisticated information technology is also making organisations more responsive.

5.   Resource availability also affects organisations. As resources become scarce, organisations have to change and adapt to business without them.

6.   People who are the customers or consumers are also putting pressure on organisations to meet their changing and growing needs. As people are improving upon their education and becoming more aware of their power, they are influencing governments to introduce more legislation to protect them at work.

Klatt, Murdick and Schuster (1978) opine that each manager must be concerned with introducing four types of changes in the human resource system:

1.   Innovations by subordinates;

2.   Changes which the manager originates;

3.   Changes imposed by higher management;

4.   Changes imposed by the environment.

The effect of any change caused by the above factors is, generally, a change in the individual manager's responsibility of the total human resource system. Such changes, affect the formal organisation, the informal organisation, roles, the attitudes of individuals, and possibly, physical factors, such as, equipment, the processing of work, the plant or office layout.

Innovations by Subordinates

As young people become employed, they bring with them new sets of values that affect organisational goals and objectives. This poses new issues for managers who are tied to past values and attitudes. One such issue is *corporate social responsibility*. In progressive companies, managers are strongly urged to stimulate productive and creative thinking by subordinates.

New ideas and innovation by the subordinate is the arena in which the manager may exercise the most positive influence in furthering both organisational and individual goals. This opportunity to make the maximum contribution they can is what workers frequently want most from their jobs (Weaver, 1976)

Changes the Manager Originates

The manager may introduce such changes gradually, vary the timing, modify them, or even withdraw them if this seems appropriate. The manager also has the

advantage of being able to obtain ready acceptance by evolving required changes with the cooperation of subordinates.

Changes imposed by the Higher Management

The manager is required to introduce changes at the workplace for the subordinates, which are imposed by the higher management.

Klatt and his associates mention examples of internally imposed changes as:

(i)   Changes in the requirements for transfers or promotions;

(ii)   Changes in work rules or work hours;

(iii)   The introduction of a female or black manager;

(iv)   A new procedure for reporting or preparing reports;

(v)   Speedup in the production line or change in the product mix;

(vi)   The transfer of some employees to a new work station or location;

(vii)   Change from a manual procedure to an automatic process;

(viii) Change to a new incentive system or compensation plan;

Changes Induced by the Environment.

Klatt and his associates point out some inputs from the environment which require change within a particular manager's organisation and operations:

(i)   New laws or government regulations. ;

(ii)   Technological advances;

(iii)   Personal turnover;

(iv)   Changes in the environment. ,

(v)   Computerisation of operations;

(vi)   Competition;

(vii)   Materials shortages;

(viii) Changing values and aspirations;

(ix)   Business cycles.

As noted earlier, technological innovations, such as, introduction of a large-scale computer, produces a new organisation structure, new positions and new interpersonal relationships. New conflicts over responsibilities consequently arise, and produce shifts in organisational patterns and roles.

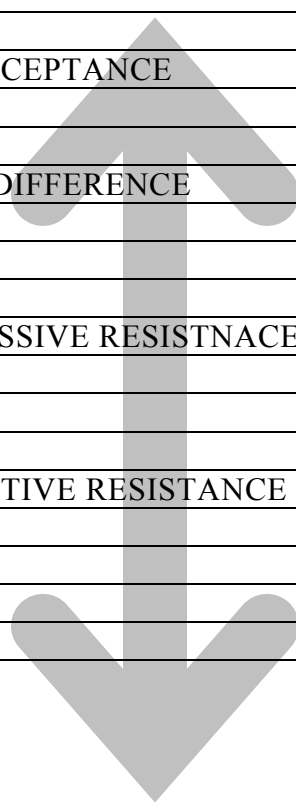## 22.3 EFFECTS OF CHANGE UPON EMPLOYEES

We should recognise that most changes that begin internally within the organisation has positive and progressive intentions and, in fact, may be necessary for the survival of the organisation. Further, the external forces may pressure for changes at the workplace.

The question is, on introduction of changes at workplace, what is their impact upon the employees of the organisation? Change demands that modifications and stability must occur. Judson (1966) suggests that these adjustments must be made in three

different ways for every employee in behavioural patterns, in psychological outlook and in social adaptation (Judson, 1966). Behavioural patterns must be adapted to fit new regulations, procedures and methods of operation. New patterns of communication, cooperation and interaction may also be modified.

The psychological effect or change is the attitude developed by an employee toward change on the basis of his own ability to cope with its demands. Judson further suggests that there is a range of attitudes usually representative of employees reacting to change that runs from open, complete acceptance of change to active resistance to it (see Figure I) These attitudes, of course, result in behavioural patterns that may attempt to enhance the outcome of change, try to impede the progress of change, or take a neutral, more passive position toward it.

Figure 1: Range of attitudes toward change and resulting behaviour

	Enthusiastic cooperation and support
	Cooperation
ACCEPTANCE	Cooperation under pressure from management
	Acceptance
	Passive resignation
INDIFFERENCE	Indifference
	Apathy; loss of interest in the job
	Doing only what is ordered
	Regressive behaviour
PASSIVE RESISTNACE	No learning
	Protests
	Working to rule
	Doing as little as possible
ACTIVE RESISTANCE	Slowing down
	Personal withdrawal
	Committing 'errors'
	Spoilage
	Deliberate sabotage

The social adaptations change calls for alterations in the relationships between employees, their superiors, their colleagues, their subordinates and the informal groups to which they belong. Change often affects the degree of social interaction between individuals and may also have an impact upon roles, status, cohesiveness, and patterns of identification and acceptance between people.

In addition to Judson's suggestions described above, change may also have an impact upon employees' job freedoms and constraints and new environment at the workplace.

It has been found that changes, even relatively minor and limited ones, tend to produce stress and tensions in employees. Gardner and Moore (1964) long ago found that "the cost in employee feelings of anxiety and insecurity and the loss of productive energies and efficiency, engendered by changes affecting the well-being and status of employees, are significant items of human and economic expense." It

is surprising therefore, that many managers still view adaptation to a work change as an individual problem which the employee must sort out himself.

22.4 SOURCES OF RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

Robbins identifies five reasons why individuals resist change: *habit, security, economic factors, and fear of the unknown* and *selective information processing*. In addition, he identifies six major sources of organisational resistance: *structural inertia, limited focus of change, group inertia, threat to expertise, threat to established power relationships* and *threat to established resource allocations*. The individual and organisations, which after all are collections of individuals, both resist change. Of course, there is little resistance to change in a company in which the previous outcomes of changes have been positive. Second, the fact that an individual is well educated or highly intelligent does not mean that he or she will be less resistant to a necessary, logical change introduced by the manager. In fact, a highly educated employee is likely to come up with more rationalisations for not making a change (Davis, 1967).

A number of explanations have been advanced for the development of attitudes and behaviour patterns of resistance to change.

Economic Reasons

Large part of employees' resistance to organisational change lies in the element of fear because employees are afraid that change will result in the loss of something important to them. All changes, promotion, transfer, demotion, reorganisation, merger, retirement and most other managerial actions, produce loss. Despite the fact that change is necessary and is often for the better, at some level of consciousness, individuals experience the threat of this displacement of loss.

Personal Reasons

When change takes place, employees face a potentially uncomfortable period of adjustment as they settle into a new organisational structure or a redesigned job. Many employees, who possess years of experience in their area of work, do not wish to learn new skills. New techniques pose the threat of personal obsolescence.

Change may undermine the fulfillment of any or all human needs, physical maintenance, security, affiliation, social esteem (recognition and reputation), competence, power, achievement and hope. When a new superior comes on the scene, for example, an employee may immediately become concerned about the protection of his needs for security, competence and power and social esteem. Similarly employees may resent the fact that they did not have a part in the change decision.

Social Reasons

Organisational changes which break long time social relationships may be feared by the employees. An employee who does not participate in the changes affecting relationships with others may resent change. Similarly, employees are likely to oppose change which threatens their group status.

Political Reasons

Political considerations may also act as the sources of resistance to change. At the political executive level, change may mean shifts in power and the realignment of

power cliques. The unions representing organised production, clerical and some professional employees may fear that changes will reduce and affect the informally developed power of these groups in some offices or workplaces.

Tensions may occur as a result of the pressures from uncertainty, insecurity, or from other concerns. But there will be no problem of concern to the manager involving the development of a strategy for change. However, change often results in resistance, and negative employee reactions may doom the success of programmes of change if not handled properly.

22.5 DEALING WITH RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

Kotter and Schlesinger suggest a number of tactics for use by change agents in dealing with resistance to change: education and communication, participation and involvement, facilitation and support, negotiation and agreement, manipulation and co-optation and explicit and implicit coercion. The following is a brief description of each:

Education and Communication

Resistance to change can be reduced through adequate communication to those affected by intended changes. Lack of clear communication leaves room for distorted interpretation of facts and intentions. If employees receive the full facts and information and get any misunderstanding cleared up, resistance will be minimised.

Participation and Involvement

Employees are less likely to offer resistance to decisions for change which they have participated in making. Assuming that the participants have the experience and knowledge to contribute, their involvement can reduce resistance, obtain commitment, and increase the quality of the change decision.

Facilitation and Support

By offering counseling, guidance and training during the change process, the management can deal with the fear and anxiety that employees may have about not being able to cope with change.

Negotiation and Agreement

Another way for the change agent to deal with potential resistance to change is to use negotiation as a tactic. For example change needs can be overcome by offering lucrative redundancy packages to key workers or golden handshakes to departing chief executives.

Manipulation and Co-optation

Distorting facts to make them appear more attractive, withholding undesirable information, and creating false rumours to get employees to accept a change are all explanations of 'manipulation'. On the other hand, 'co-optation' is a form of both manipulation and participation. It seeks to buy off the potential workers and leaders who resist change by giving them a key role in the change decision.

Coercion

Coercion tactic is used by managers to force people to accept a change decision. Some examples of coercion are threats of transfer, loss of promotions, negative performance evaluations, and poor letters of recommendation.

In brief, it is suggested that management should use a range of these approaches to introduce change successfully, often by combining them and recognising their strengths and constraints.

22.6 APPROACHES TO CHANGE

There are mainly three popular approaches to managing change, (1) Lewin's Classic Three-step Model of the Change Process,(2) Action Research, and (3)Organisational Development.

22.6.1. Lewin's Three-Step Model

Lewin (1951) made an effort in the process of bringing about effective change. According to him most efforts at change fail for the reason that people are unwilling to alter long-established attitudes and behaviour. To overcome this obstacle, Lewin developed a three-step sequential model of the change process. It involves (1) "unfreezing" the present behaviour pattern, (2) "changing" (movement) or developing a new behaviour pattern, and then (3) "refreezing" or reinforcing the new behaviour (See, Figure 2)

(i)   Unfreezing, involves making the need for change so obvious, that the individual, group, or organisation can readily see and accept it.

(ii)   Changing, involves discovering and adopting new attitudes, values and behaviours. A trained change agent leads individuals, groups or the entire organisation through the process. During this process, the change agent will foster new values, attitudes, and behaviour through the processes of *identification* and *internalisation.* Organisation members will identify with the change agent's values, attitudes, and behaviour, internalising them, once they perceive their effectiveness in performance.

(iii).   Refreezing, means locking the new behaviour pattern by means of supporting or reinforcing mechanisms, so that it becomes the new norm.

Lewin's three-step change model depicts three stages, namely unfreezing, movement and refreezing. When the driving forces are equal and opposite, we are in a state of 'equilibrium'. The restraining forces which hinder movement from the existing equilibrium can be decreased. But when the driving forces result in movement toward our required situation, we encourage communication, participation and education to help change behaviour. In the final stage driving forces, move to a consolidation change, that is, a new behaviour. At this stage, it is important for the management to stabilise the new situation by balancing the driving and restraining forces. The formal rules and regulations governing behaviour of those affected by the change should also be revised to reinforce the new situation.

22.6.2 Action Research

By Action Research is meant, a change process based on the systematic collection of data and then selection of a change action based on what the analysed data

indicates (Stoner, Freeman, Gilbert, 1996). The importance lies in providing a scientific methodology for managing planned change. The Action Research process consists of five steps: diagnosis, analysis, feed back, action, and evaluation.

The *diagnosis* is analogous to the physician search to find what specifically ails a patient. In action research, the change agent asks questions, interviews employees, reviews records, and listens to the concern of employees after this analysis of data is done. The third step–feedback requires sharing with employees, what has been found from steps one and two. The employees, with the help of the change agent, develop action plans for bringing about any needed change. In the fourth step, the employees and the change agent carry out the specific actions to correct the problems that have been identified. The final step of action research is *evaluation* of the action plan's effectiveness. Using the initial data gathered as a benchmark, any subsequent changes can be compared and evaluated.

Two specific benefits are seen from the action research. First, it is problem-centered. The change agent objectively looks for problems and the type of problem determines the type of change action. Second, because action research involves largely employees in the process, resistance to change is reduced.

22.6.3 Organisational Development

Organisational development (OD) is concerned with the process of change rather than used to encompass a collection of change itself. Although OD frequently includes structural and technological changes, its primary focus is on changing people and the nature and quality of their working relationships. Formally, OD has been defined "as a top management-supported, long range effort to improve an organisation's problem solving and renewal process, particularly through a more effective and collaborative diagnosis and management of organisation culture, with special emphasis on formal work team, temporary team, and inter-group culture with the assistance of a consultant or facilitator and the use of the theory and technology of applied behavioural science, including action research".(French and Bell, 1981)

Robbins (2001) briefly identifies the following underlying values in most OD efforts:

I.   *Respect for people:* Individuals are perceived as being responsible, conscientious, and caring. They should be treated with dignity and respect.

II.   *Trust and support:* The effective and healthy organisation is characterised by trust, authenticity, openness, and a supportive climate.

III. *Power equalisation***:** Effective organisations deemphasize hierarchical authority and control.

IV.   *Confrontation:* Problems shouldn't be swept under the rug. They should be openly confronted.

V.   *Participation:* The more that people who are likely to be affected by change are involved in the decisions surrounding that change, the more will they be committed to implementing those decisions".

OD Techniques for Change

Following are some of the OD techniques for bringing about change:

(i) Sensitivity Training

Sensitivity training or T-groups (training groups) refers to a method of changing behaviour through unstructured group interaction. Members are brought together in a free and open environment in which participants discuss issues and study their interactive processes, loosely directed by a professional behavioural scientist.

The objectives of the T-groups sought to be achieved, include increased ability to emphasise with others, improved listening skills, greater openness, increased tolerance of individual differences, and improved conflict resolution skills.

(ii) Survey Feedback

Survey feedback is a tool for assessing attitudes held by organisational members; identify discrepancies among member perceptions, and solving these differences. Under the survey feedback approach (Edwards Thomas), a questionnaire is usually completed by all members on relevant issues in the organisation and workplaces.

(iii) Process Consultation

In process consultation, a consultant works with organisation members to help them understand the dynamics of their working relationships in group or team situations. The consultant helps the group members to change the ways they work together and to develop the diagnostic and problem-solving skills they need for more effective problem solving (Schein, 1969)

(iv) Team Building

Organisations are increasingly relying on teams to accomplish work tasks. Team building utilises high-interaction group activities to increase trust and openness among team members (Dyer, 1994). This approach analyses the activities, resource allocations, and relationships of a group or team to improve its effectiveness. The team building can also address itself to clarifying each member's role on the team.

(v) Inter-group Development

Inter-group development seeks to change the attitudes, stereotypes, and perceptions that groups have to each other. This approach seeks to improve inter-group relations through a method which emphasises problem- solving. In this approach, each group meets independently to develop lists of its perception of itself, the other group, and how it believes the other group perceives it. The groups later share their lists, after which strengths and weaknesses are discussed.

22.7   MANAGEMENT GOALS AND ACTIONS FOR INTRODUCING CHANGE

Klatt and his associates say that the manager involved in any type of change goes through four steps:

(i)   "Recognises that a change is necessary or desirable;

(ii)   Determines the ideal change;

(iii)   Decides how to implement the change;

(iv)   Introduces the most practical form of the ideal change".

Further, they suggest that each of these steps can produce an undesirable reaction or a particular resistance from the employee:

(i)   "To the very idea of a change

(ii)   To the intended change.

(iii)   To the method of implementing the change.

(iv)   To the changed state itself".

The effective manager will keep these four areas of possible resistance in mind in trying to avoid resistance, before it develops any further. When the change is under consideration, it is appropriate for the management to determine what its goals and objectives are, in bringing about change.

In the *first* place, it would seem important to define organisational objectives that support the philosophy of providing positive benefits for the organisation, the management and the community in general. Unless organisational objectives specify the pursuit of mutually beneficial results, changes may fall short of providing fulfillment for everyone.

Changes can be considered on the basis of whether or not they will contribute effectively to the reasonable fulfillment of responsibilities for the organisation, the owners, employees, customers, and citizens of the community at large. However, when external factors make change necessary, care can be observed to try to share the reasons for the change with those affected, and to channel the modifications, so that they have the interests of everyone. It may be mentioned here that changes that offer minimal opportunities for success and desirable results normally should not be given serious consideration because the adverse effects of adaptation to change will often overshadow the attainable merits.

Second, it would seem desirable and essential to allow and encourage employee participation in deciding whether or not the change should be made and how it should be made. Participation helps in the disclosure of the causes of change, its consequences, and its implications so that uncertainties concerning it are avoided. Participation in the change process is one of the most useful tools of management for the successful introduction and implementation of alterations and innovations at the workplaces.

Third, when an official decision to change is reached a modification of those affected by change usually is helpful. A public enterprise that is informed or knows a year in advance that it will be necessary to transfer several employees to new jobs can take the necessary steps to provide the reorientation, training, equipment realignment, social adjustment, and other actions necessary to be ready for the transfer when it finally happens. Employees appreciate advance communication of changes that affect them personally so that they can begin to make physical, psychological, and social readjustments.

Fourth, it would be of mutually beneficial results if such managerial policies are adopted as provide protection and support for employees when faced with change. A wage policy that guarantees that employees cannot be forced by any changing events to accept jobs with lower pay scales within the organisation removes some of the economic threat of change. Likewise, a policy of retraining employees whose skills have become obsolete lends encouragement when technology forces change. Most policies that provide protection from fears of loss and threats will improve attitudes toward impending changes.

Fifth, there may be an apprehension of fears and personal losses because of change at the workplaces. Judson suggests the use of 'tentative approach' for overcoming fears (Judson, 1986). This technique is basically the establishment of a trial period of change in which employees are asked to work under the new requirements or conditions without actually accepting the change and committing themselves to abide by its new demands. By this technique, those involved with strong preconceptions are in a better position to regard the change with greater objectivity. Moreover, the management is better able to evaluate the method of change and make any necessary modifications before carrying it out more fully. The tentative approach has a way of defusing potentially explosive rejection of change.

Sixth, it is equally important to give attention to the change agents selected to introduce change. Selection of individuals as change agents who are respected and who have the confidence of other workers, improves the probabilities of successful reactions and adjustments to change.

Seventh, certain fruitful efforts can be made to provide for compensation or substitution for personal losses. When the employees lose something as a result of change that cannot be prevented (loss of wages, loss of desirable social climate, loss of freedom, and so forth), an effort can be made to substitute something else for the loss.

And, *finally*, implementing change and getting its acceptance is an important managerial function. This requires support from the labour unions, informal work groups, influential individuals and government agencies. For example, employee's unions and informal work groups within the formal organisation may encourage members to give favourable responses to change when the benefits of change are communicated and understood. Influential individuals both within and outside organisations may be persuasive in leading individuals to respond favourably to change. Government agencies sometimes provide financial and advisory assistance in the implementation of changes.

22.8 CONCLUSION

We live in a world of change. Change is a continuous process. Continuity is as important for the success of an organisation, as, change. Change frequently results from internal plans to improve the performance of the organisation and to benefit organisational members and others. Change also may be a result of external influences, including economic, technological and social factors.

The discussion in this Unit provides explanations for the resistance and rejection of change that frequently occur. Fear often prevails in employees when change is introduced. The individuals who serve as change agents also play a part in eliciting acceptance or rejection of change.

It should be the purpose of the management to maximise the effects of change at workplaces and to minimise the negative consequences upon the organisation and its owners, employees, customers and citizens of the community at large. If the managerial actions suggested in this Unit are implemented, the results of change will be beneficial to employees at the workplaces and to the management as a whole.

22.9   KEY CONCEPTS

Action Research: The method through which change agents learn what improvements are needed and how the organisation can best be aided in making those improvements.

Change Agent: The individual leading or guiding the process of change in an organisational situation.

Refreezing: Transforming a new behavioural pattern into the norm through reinforcement and support mechanisms.

Sensitive Training: An early personal growth technique that emphasises increased sensitivity in interpersonal relationships.

Team Limiting: A method of improving organisational effectiveness at the team level by diagnosing barriers to team performance and improving interteam relationships and task accomplishment.

Unfreezing: Making the need for change so obvious that the individual, group or organisation can readily see and accept that change must occur.

22.10   REFERENCES AND FURHTER READING

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22.11 ACTIVITIES

1) Discuss managerial actions to enhance the positive side of change and to minimise the negative consequences of change at workplaces.

2) Describe principal approaches to bringing about change.

3) Discuss the concept of organisational development (OD).