

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING ASPECTS OF RESISTANCE TO CHANGE WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION

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Abstract: *The article addresses the process of adapting to organizational change, people need to change and acquire new knowledge, absorb more information, cope with new tasks, improve their skill levels, and many times also need to change their work habits, values and attitudes. Changing values and attitudes is critical to successful organizational change. Motivation for change must come from the assumption that success depends on the need for change. This requires managers to make employees feel uncomfortable in certain situations to encourage them to try new behaviours in the company.*

In this context, change management is an essential component in company success, which is why the literature describing the success initiatives of change management is increasingly extensive. The topics most studied in the literature imply resistance to change, employees' readiness for change, leadership effectiveness, employees' involvement, participation and commitment in change processes, and the roles and skills required for the success implementation of organizational change. The purpose of this study in which I have used the bibliography method is to present two major topics discussed in the literature, namely, resistance to change and employees' readiness for change. The article also highlights the importance of knowledge-based management, which involves using technology and data to make strategic decisions and improve organizational performance.

Keywords: organizational change, organizational management, resistance management

1. Introduction

Modern society is in a process of constant change and development. The main characteristics of the current market economy are: globalization, competitive trends, major changes and rapid technological progress, and major changes related to the labor force. These characteristics force organizations to step up and increase their efforts to achieve the changes needed for long-term survival and effectiveness. Therefore, all changes in organizations are seen as a function of the external environment (social, economic, and political) and the relationships between members, groups, or subgroups within the organization. Organizational

development requires significant changes at the system structural level (organizational climate, technology, ways of working) and at the organizational member level (changes in attitudes, values, beliefs, feelings, ways of coping with change) [2].

Employees must be trained to initiate, lead and implement the modifications and/or changes that might be required in different moments to streamline activities of the organization as a whole. The organizational structure must submit the necessary flexibility, the possible takeover of economic shocks and take measures in order to adapt to new market conditions. Organizational development is a strategy to

increase efficiency by determining certain organizational changes planned in the long run, having in mind both the human resources and technical organization. The aim is to improve the organization's effectiveness and health through its ability to cope with environmental changes, to improve internal relations and to increase capacity to solve problems. In fact, this approach to organizational development takes into account that no major change is not going to be able to produce or will not lead to the expected results if people don't understand or don't accept the change. The organization, in an attempt to respond to environmental requirements, will be faced with the forces of the interior who oppose changes to the strength and endurance of individuals towards change [4].

In order for change to occur, it is necessary for people to be involved in its planning and implementation. They must be trained to understand their own feelings towards the other members of the organization and must learn to understand the organization in relation to the surrounding environment. The organization is found between the two foreign forces strengths of change and internal forces opposed to change. The balance between these strengths determine a particular state of the organization, characterized by a certain level of performance. Production change requires "breaking" this balance. The role of organizational development consists precisely in the creation of preconditions for change and in imposing those changes, the optimal performance of the organization will increase; organizational process being designed to formulate and implement a strategy to increase the efficiency of the organization [7].

2. Adapting People to Organizational Changes

In the process of adapting to organizational change, people must adopt change and must acquire new knowledge, to absorb more information, to tackle new tasks, to improve the degree of skills and very often to change their work habits, values and attitudes of the organizations. Changing values and attitudes is essential. Likely that there can be no real change without a change of attitude. Specialists in management science agree upon a common useful concept regarding the change in humans, the one developed by Kurt Lewin. It is a sequential model, whose stages are named: "unfreeze", "change" and "refreeze" [1].

Unfreeze creates an unsettling situation to some extent because is assumed that it takes a certain degree of apprehension. Change or advance towards change, is the central stage, where both the leadership and the staff start practical new relationships and behaviors. This process can be difficult, requiring usually a considerable effort of the part who is changing and a lot of patience, creativity and imagination of the part that helps the change process to convert external reasons to internal reasons, accepting the proposed change. Refreezing occurs when the changed person finds this through his own experience. The sub-processes of refreeze involve and require a supportive environment (for example, approval of the new behavior by the managers) and are usually accompanied by the fact that the person begins to have a better opinion about themselves as a result of a sense of accomplishment and as a result of fulfilling the new tasks. In the initial stages of the refreezing phase, it is recommended to carry out a consolidation of behavior required (through rewards, praise, etc.) in order to accept the process of learning [8].

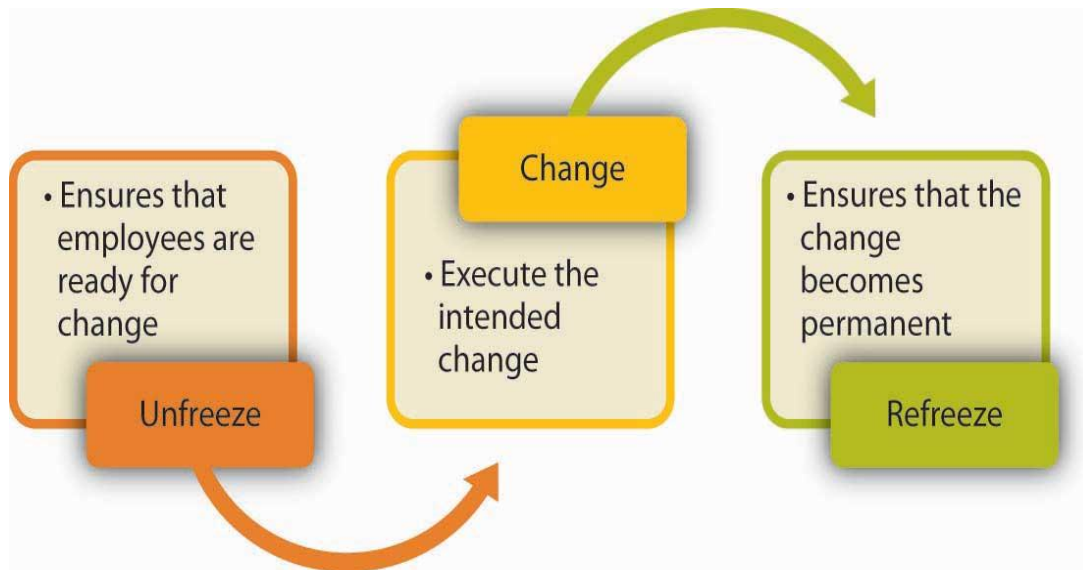


Figure 1: Kurt Lewin's change model

Source:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276847540 Sustaining Technology in classrooms under the Sankore Project A case study of a multi-pronged approach/figures?lo=1](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276847540_Sustaining_Technology_in_classrooms_under_the_Sankore_Project_A_case_study_of_a_multi-pronged_approach/figures?lo=1) [11]

3. Employees Resistance to Learning and Change

For most people, the changes are bad. Despite the best intentions, the change does not bring well from day one and there are plenty of people who oppose the very idea of change. The main reasons why people oppose to change are [3]:

- Loss of control

Something what employees know is usually something they can control. The change affects the autonomy, and people can feel like losing ground when things follow a different course. For example, some people feel comfortable in an environment that can seem messy for others.

- High degree of uncertainty

Most employees prefer to work in a stable environment in what they know what's happening in the present and therefore they can predict with some degree of certainty what will happen in the near future. Such an environment creates comfort for employees because they know that there are things that they can expect as a result of their actions. If the change makes people feel as if they go on a cliff blindfolded, then they will

reject the change. Unfortunately, people prefer a bad situation, but with which they are used, instead of requesting a change.

- Too many updates

Changes mean new things by definition. However, when there are too many updates, employees become reluctant.

- Lack of jurisdiction

Another important reason people oppose the changes is caring about the lack of skills required in the new context.

- More work

A greater volume of work can push employees to reject the change.

- Previous unpleasant experiences

A person who had unpleasant experiences related to a change, associates change with negative feelings. Therefore, it happens often that some employees to refuse a change order that starts from the assumption that it will bring inconvenience. For example, if an employee has been part of an organization and has lost advantages over time or if it has received additional tasks without being paid, it certainly will reject future organizational change.

- Things go well as they are in the present

Sometimes, employees believe the company is better in the present and will get worse with additional changes. In these circumstances, people do not see the point of changes. Why make a change if the current procedures are efficient and have good results?

- Fear of failure and risks

People are generally skeptical in face of what they don't know and, indeed, are afraid that a new thing or a new structure

might not work. Any change involves some degree of risk, so that at any time, anything can happen and might result into failure.

- Pressure groups of colleagues

It happens many times that attitude towards change rejection to be stimulated by pressure from colleagues, especially when people don't have enough information and rumors abound. When opposition to a certain shift gets the status of a common cause, it becomes much more difficult to remove.

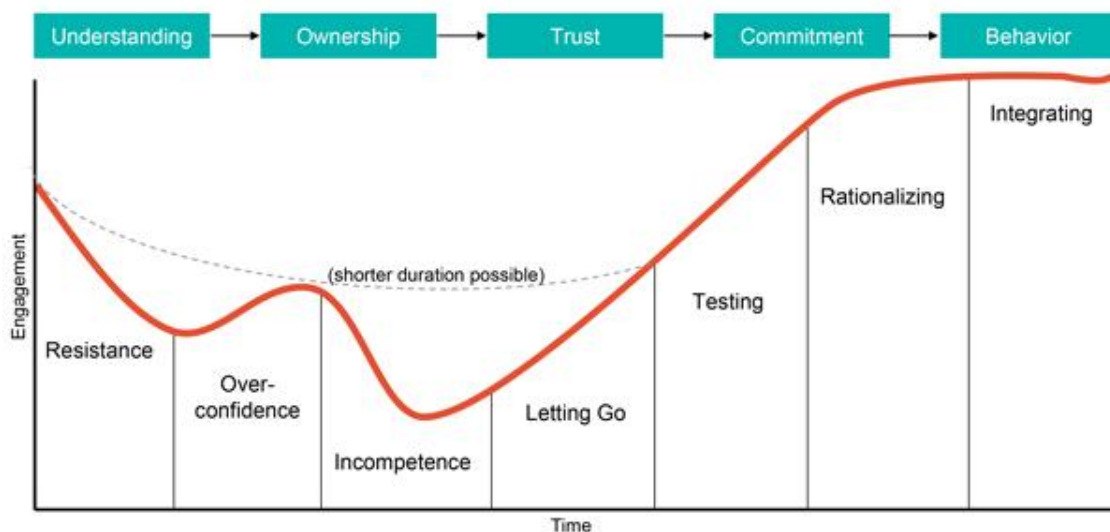


Figure 2: The Change Curve (screenshot via WillisTowersWatson)

Source: <https://www.hubengage.com/employee-engagement/engagement-with-employees-insights-from-the-web-the-ultimate-collection/> [12]

Due to the very important role that owns the process of development, change has become a trend today, by invading sovereign economic, social, political, cultural environment, etc. Thus, given that in the current economic environment, competition is fierce, many businesses resort to various changes, in order to obtain or maintain competitive advantage. These changes can be at a small or large scale [5]. Changes can be simple or complex, considering issues such as: amendment of certain rules and procedures, introduction of new technologies, creating new departments and directions, a process of reorganization, etc. The change process is more complex, the more powerful it is felt at the individual level: employees have

different reactions when faced with major changes at the organizational level; these reactions depend on both employee traits and abilities of managers to devise efficient scrolling of this process of change. Thus, at the individual level, it can develop unconscious defense mechanisms, the representing employee self-protection strategies when it detects certain threats posed by changing certain feelings of anxiety, frustration. Defense mechanisms that we can develop as employees can be adaptive, or non-adaptive, with positive or negative influences on the achieved change. Adaptive defense mechanisms are associated with a small resistance towards the process of change, while non-adaptive

defense mechanisms are associated with a high degree of resistance to change [9].

Adaptive mechanisms were channeling feelings in order to accept change, to adapting to the concrete life situations; they facilitate the balance of emotional and adaptation to the environment. Adaptive mechanisms of most common may be listed as:

- **Humor.** The employee has the ability to identify aspects of fun or ironic even in those difficult situations and in the midst of uncertainty. Through consideration of humor as ally, the employee goes through the process of change in a pleasant manner and generating energy and positive influences along with other team members.

- **Anticipation.** Through this mechanism, we can imagine the future employee, experimenting and seeking their own emotional reactions, imagining for viable solutions for efficient adaptation to change. Predicts future events based on previous experience, but uses a large measure and intuition. In order to be adaptive, this anticipation must not turn into reverie, but must have the basis for a real support.

- **Self affirmation** by expressing feelings. During the activities, the employee expressing openly their opinions, emotions, feelings, thus reducing the degree of anxiety regarding the change and, by default, favoring a more open towards the process of adapting to the changes made at the level of the company.

Unlike the adaptive mechanisms aim at blocking feelings, the non-adaptive generates a high degree of resistance in the face of change. Most of the times, the following non-adaptive mechanisms may appear:

- The denial, which can be illustrated through the following example: faced with a process of reorganization, an employee avoids to face realistically the situation, saying: “it can't be true”, “this reorganization will not affect” or “not at all uneasy about this change”.

- The screening. This can be commonly associated with the denial and represents a form of self-disappointment, by which the employee assigns to another person his or her own thoughts, desires which produce a state of discomfort. The same employee who claims that there is unsettled in terms of reorganization, will say that his bosses or other colleagues are the ones affected by the reorganization.

- Activism is another way in which the defense may be used by some members of the organization when they perceive change as a threat.

Considering all the aspects mentioned above, we can say with certainty that, in view of the performance of optimal conditions to change, it is necessary to initiate changes to pay attention not only to technical aspects, elements relating to financial projections, but also those who aim at human factors. In this way, the company achieves a balance between the needs of the organization and those of the employees, resulting in commitments and joint efforts, aimed to ensure the success of the process of change [10].

Among the elements that contribute to the prevention of the appearance of defense mechanisms in the face of change, the following elements can be listed:

- good information to employees about the changes taking place and the actions that derive from the changes;

- feedback provided by managers to employees regarding the progress that they make in relation to the requirements of change;

- maintaining a permanent dialogue between managers and team members, so they can identify in a timely manner any obstacles in the way of change and optimum solutions for coping with difficult moments;

- taking into account the individual issues that may prove very important in attaining change. This includes aspects such as certain features of employees: for some, the change represents a challenge desired, anticipated, intended to stimulate

development; for others, however, who are more conservative, or who want only “a warm” represents a threat to their comfort.;

- a level of anxiety to the employee's personal, as a result of previous experiences; for example, a person who has already passed through a process of restructuring at a previous job may have the tendency to develop defense mechanisms in the face of the impending new changes. Similarly, an employee who had personal problems (divorce, separation, loss of a loved beings etc.) may be inclined to make analogies between anxiety, trauma felt in that time and the danger of a major shift in the workplace [6].

4. Conclusions

Change management is becoming increasingly difficult and important in all organizations. Changing an organization's

mission is an extremely challenging task because an organization faces a dynamic environment and resistance to change while resisting the people trying to effect change. Any attempt at organizational change will pose a threat to certain groups of employees. Organizational change is often accompanied by conflicting interests, ethics, and behaviours, not just emotional turmoil. Leaders responsible for change must learn to navigate these dangerous waters. Top management must be responsible for developing strategic plans. While there are innovative ways to increase employee participation in the strategic planning process, the ultimate responsibility lies with top management. There is no substitute for the leadership responsibility of resisting change.

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