IMPACT OF CHANGE AGENT IN CHANGE PROCESS

Anil Kumar

Assistant Professor, SGND Khalsa College

Karol Bagh New Deelhi

Introduction

What is really meant by the notion "organizational change"? Huber (1991) writes that organizational change means a new position or another position compared to how the organization functioned and how its members and leaders acted earlier. Change is a type of organizational development while the members of the organization change by the input of new strategies, which in turn leads to behavioral change. The change will develop the organization to better fit predicted future environments. (Porras & Silvers, 1991) According to Nonas (2005), Porras and Silvers (1991) theory indicates that the organization has complete control over its development. Organizations are open systems meaning that they are characterized by continuously ongoing processes of input, transformation and output interacting with a surrounding environment. It is impossible to achieve complete control over an open system, while it is affected by external forces consisting of surrounding systems, like customer, supplier, society etc. (Katz & Kahn, 1987).Change is constant modification that comes about of unexpected events in everyday work. This theory assumes that it is impossible to have complete control over the organization's development and that the result of a change will normally not be exactly as the predicted result. (Norrgren et al., 1996 in Nonas, 2005) In Nonas (2005, pp 6) the following popular definition of change can be read: "the only thing that can be predicted about a change is that no change follows its original plan". One main factor in implementing a successful organizational change is that much attention is focused on communication. It is a tool for conveying information and creating understanding for the change within the organization".

Organizations perceive change as very important for its survival and prosperity in today's most competitive environment and new business challenges. They make change initiative to keep up the pace with changing environment and new challenging competition. The success and performance superiority of organizations are very much dependent on its ability to align its internal arrangement with the demand of external world. While studying the change literature, the concept of change and its differentiation/types seem very ambiguous and it was

very difficult to understand the overall picture of change from the scattered literature. As different authors have defined change, based on their differentiation, in different manners, e.g. Schien defined change as it can be natural evolutionary, planned and unplanned change, Leavitt expanded the technical-social (technical & social change) framework, by adding structural change (Leavitt, 1965). Change as an important factor is very challenging & complex and great amount of care should be taken while making change. One of major threats to organizational change is employees' resistance and has usually very unpleasant and negative implications for organization.

A similarity between the different sorts of changes with the strength of the wind can be drawn. A small change can be as a soft summer breeze that only disturbs a few papers while a big change is like a mighty howling gale which may cause devastation to structures causing a need for rebuilding. The organizational life is much more uncertain today compared with the situation a couple of years ago. The differences are that the pace of change is quicker and the future becomes more unpredictable. Furthermore, this development is predicted to continue and the organizational world will change at a fast rate. To have the ability to follow this fast rate of change, it is important that the organizational managers and decision makers understand and are aware of the factors that trigger the organizational change. (Senior & Fleming, 2006).

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Page 12

of a change will normally not be exactly as the predicted result. (Norrgren et al., 1996 in Nonås, 2005) In Nonås (2005, pp 6) the following popular definition of change can be read: "the only thing that can be predicted about a change is that no change follows its original plan". One main factor in implementing a successful organizational change is that much attention is focused on communication. It is a tool for conveying information and creating understanding for the change within the organization. (Nonås, 2005)

To realize effective and successful change, organizations need both management and leadership. Management is a set of processes that keep a complicated system of people and technology running smoothly. The most important aspects of management include planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling and problem solving. Leadership on the other hand, is a set of processes that creates organizations in the first place or adapts them to significantly changing circumstances. Leadership defines what the future should look like, aligns people with that vision and inspires them to make it happen despite the obstacles. To perform change it is important with competent management and without this, the transformation process can get out of control. But for most organizations, the bigger challenge is to lead change. It is only leadership that can motivate the actions needed to alter behavior in a significant way and anchor the change in the culture of an organization. In modern, complex organizations it is not enough with only one leader; many people need to assist the leadership task. The risk with too much focus on management rather than leadership leads to an inward focus and bureaucracy takes over. In companies with success that creates some degree of market dominance that then leads to company growth, the physical expansion of the organization leads to a much greater need for management. This focus, together with arrogant managers who over evaluate their current performance and competitive position; can result in a "slow" organization that has great difficulty in making any transformation or change. This above described pattern is especially evident in large, established firms where getting a transformation process started proves often more difficult. It is also a risk that, in these kinds of companies, the change programs are over managed and under led. (Kotter, 1996).The far most important ethical issue that the organization and its leader should deal with before implementing any change strategy is that of defining the goals, behavioral outcomes or expected change objectives. In a large organization, it is likely that this kind of process will break down making it impossible to realize the change. The

spreading of too much information within the organization can be a problem in a change process as the information may generate resistance that there is often not enough resources to deal with. It is better to introduce the change gradually within the organization and in smaller groups, thereby allowing for clear and correct explanations and avoiding misunderstandings. (Nielsen, Nykodym & Brown, 1991).When a change is needed, the leader must often take the role as a change agent. He or she must guide the organization through changes, implement changes and support organizational members in adapting to the changes. Today, when change is always present, leadership can be defined as the process of managing change. It is the leaders' responsibility to ensure that the organization and its members are flexible enough to manage an adaptation of behaviors and skills to fit environment changes. If the individual will manage to contribute to their changing organization, the leader must emphasize, encourage and provide continuous education and learning. (Howell & Costley, 2006).

 The group for the change normally only involves a small number of people and is expected to delimit the risks that the change process may develop in an unexpected direction. (Norrgren et al., 1996 in Nonas, 2005)Organizations using learning strategy see change as a pattern of constant modifications. While they do not believe it is possible to create complete control over the change process and the organizations development, they do not see the value of deciding exact final results in advance. They do not neglect the planning process, but they see the need for balancing improvisation with a clear plan. Management and employees try together to decide the future goal and the task then for the management is to create conditions where the employees can participate in the process. The learning strategy places focus on getting groups with different wills and knowledge together. These mixed groups will lead to a broad acceptance and understanding of the change. (Norrgren et al., 1996 in Nonas, 2005).

Reactions to Change

The hazard of organizational failure increases with organizational change and such a change increases the likelihood of an additional change of the same type. Both these effects decline over time. (Amburgey, Kelly & Barnett, 1993) Amburgey, Kelly and Barnett (1993) research study is based on a model that was presented by Hannan and Freeman in 1984, which includes both internal and external constraints on organizational change. Organizations exist as long as they are reliable and act rationally. When organizational goals are strong and institutionalized and the activities are routines, the reliability and accountability are high

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Page 14

within the organization. However institutionalization and reutilization also generate strong pressure against organizational change. This means, that the characteristics of organizations stability also generates resistance to changes. Changes disturb internal routines as well as connection with external stakeholders and both internal and external stakeholders prefer reliable and predictable performance. This means, that organizational change is hazardous and normally disturbs the equilibrium of the organization. Organizational change increases the failure rate of organizations, independent of the effects of the changed characteristics. The reason for this statement is as stated above, that a change disturbs the routines in the company. (Amburgey, Kelly & Barnett, 1993)Another statement is that the disruptive effect of organizational change increases with the age of the organization. The reason is that internal roles and formal structures are more established in older organizations. The old organization also has more standardized routines and a change in this environment leads to more disruption in both the internal and the external environment. (Amburgey, Kelly & Barnett, 1993)A third statement from Amburgey, Kelly and Barnett (1993), is that the disruptive effect decreases with elapsed time since the occurrence of the change. Immediately after an organizational change, even an old organization returns to the same conditions that make young organizations more likely to fail, the liability of newness (Carroll & Delacroix, 1982). A while after a change, the organization starts to build up new routines and processes and the negative effect from the change starts to fade out (Amburgey, Kelly & Barnett, 1993).

Causes of Employees' Resistance

The study of causes/antecedents in the literature of employees' resistance is very important as it plays significant role in proposing solutions and implementation of different measures to overcome resistance and its resulting problems. As discussed by Mintzberg, "the cure might actually prove to be just more of the cause" (Mintzberg 1998 p. 324). In addition, to make successful organizational change, lots of work has been done by different authors and researchers to find the major causes of employee's resistance and to perfectly deal with the symptoms of resistance. This will lead organizations to solve the right problem which is causing resistance to change.One or some of the below causes can lead the change to severe resistance from employees. The consequences of employees' resistance are very important to be mentioned here, to reveal the miseries of resistance for organization and the change program. The consequences of employee's resistance to change range from; slow down of the

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Page 15

change (and thus increase in cost) (Bryant, 2006), less productivity (outcome), employees corruption, high employees' turnover, disturbance & trouble in change program, failure of change program, and in extreme situation it can even lead the organization to destabilization & breakdown (Coetsee, 1999; Coch and French, 1948). Organizations may face the above problems in change due to employees' resistance. It should not be denied that resistance to change might be a valuable employees' passion that can be channeled more constructively (Dent Eric and Goldberg Susan 1999). It may help in improving the change plan by utilizing rather than just overcoming (Waddell and Sohal Amrik 1998). After studying the different causes of employees' resistance to change, as, discussed by different authors. Factors which influence the organization can be sorted into four different groups, and they refer to the political, economic, technological and socio-cultural factors. These factors can influence the organizations strategies, structures and means of operation. Triggers for change can come from all these sorts of groups. For example access to the bank via the Internet is a result of a technical trigger, identified as the enormous increase in the ability to communicate through the Internet. (Senior & Fleming, 2006) Other examples of triggers are when a new competitor appears and takes a big share of the company's market, when an old customer is acquired by a giant conglomerate that changes the sales condition or when a new invention offers a possibility of changing the existing production technology. These were examples of external triggers, but there are also internal triggers for change. Examples of internal triggers are new CEO or other senior managers or a revision of administrative structures. This means that the organization must handle both external and internal forces for change. (Goodstein & Burke, 1991) Senior and Fleming (2006) assert that small-scale, incremental changes often originate from the internal environment, while changes with more wide-range impact on an organization normally arise from the external environment.

Change is generally motivated by events in an organization's environment, like a sudden problem or by way of a surprise, like a new customer demand or shift in technology. An unexpected problem can show that existing routines are insufficient and this realization in turn can trigger a change. Problems do not always induce change; neither in organization nor in everyday life and an ignorance of problems can many times lead to a real disaster for the organization. It can depend on the willingness to ignore disconfirming or discrepant information by individuals or that the organization adjusts the goal after the outcome, which makes it harder to identify and react to problems. Some argue that small failures are likely to

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Page 16

be ignored. (Staudenmayer et al., 2002).To perform a change, someone in the organization needs to have the power and influence to change the behavior of other people in the organization. The meaning of power is that the person, who has this, can influence someone else's behavior. Not everyone in an organization will agree about which persons have power. Existence of power is to a large extent in the eye of the beholder. It does not need to be the person with the most resources or knowledge who has the power, but the belief by others that he or she has that power of control. (Senior & Fleming, 2006) There are two different categories of power, formal power and personal power. The power related to the persons position within the organization and the ability to have the right information and give rewards is formal power. The personal power derives from the individuals characteristics, such as skill, expertise and personality. (Robbins, 2005 in Senior and Fleming, 2006).

The Change Agent

The change agent is often a person whose mission is to build the motivation to make the change and help the organization to identify changes in functions that must be done. The change agent also helps the organization to carry out necessary changes for the future. The agent's task starts with a diagnostic phase where the agent tries to evolve a model with existing theory that is adapted to the particular organization. In short, the change agent's role is to act as transducer between scientific knowledge regarding organizational functioning and change processes and the particular situation during this phase. The developed model must be reasonably complete, predictive and adequate to provide the organization with useful information. (Bowers & Franklin, 1972).The model must be presented to the members of the organization in an excellent way, because the issue of acceptance is critical. Even if it is a really good model, it has no value without a good understanding of the members of the organization. To realize this, the change agent must be a good communicator and has enough knowledge about the groups' tasks to relate the model with these tasks, that is to say an understanding of the organizations reality. In later stages, the change agent often helps the organizations members with skill acquisition and perfection. The agent must not only know which skills are necessary, but also be competent in guiding the acquisition. The agent needs skills for handling everything between problem solving, giving and receiving feedback, listening, general leadership, resolving conflict etc. In the end of the change process, the goal

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Page 17

is that the organizational members start to rely more and more on themselves and the need for the change agent decreases. (Bowers & Franklin, 1972).

Ties of a change agent

The tie strength is a combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie(Granovetter 1973). Organizational scholars following on Granovetter's footsteps have highlighted the informational implications of strong ties, arguing that emotional closeness between two actors motivates them to invest time and energy in sharing complex, tacit or confidential knowledge (Hansen 1999). The foundation of trust has been shown to increase cooperation among organizational subunits during a crisis, boosting an organization's adaptive performance in response to exogenous and endogenous shocks (Krackhardt 1992; Krackhardt and Stern 1998).Building on this research, we argue that strong ties provide a change agent with a relational basis to overcome resistance when attempting to institute organizational change. Below we specify mechanisms through which strong ties to organization members with the potential to derail change allow the change agent to reduce resistance and thus boost the chances of change adoption. We then identify conditions under which such mechanisms are likely to affect fence-sitters and resistors differently.

Strong ties can increase an actor's ability to introduce organizational change by providing her with an affective basis for the cooptation of actors capable of influencing the outcome of the change initiative. Cooptation is the preeminent influence tactic to manage those with the potential to hinder an actor's goals (Gargiulo 1993; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). Selznick (1949) first defined cooptation as a political process for managing opposition. Organizational scholars first conceptualized cooptation as a tactic for preserving organizational stability (Selznick 1949), but the influence achieved through cooptation can be directed toward garnering support for new ideas as much as it can be used to preserve the status quo in an organization (Gargiulo 1993).

Review of literature

Different authors have discussed the importance of causes/antecedents of employees' resistance to change to know the right problem and develop strategies to overcome it. Kurt Lewin discussed first the employees' resistance to change in 1940's. His early work focused

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Page 18

on the aspects of individual behavior that must be addressed in order to bring about effective organizational change (Kurt 1945).Different studies are being conducted on a various issues concerning resistance by the employees. Some of them are reviewed and produced here.

Amburgey, Kelly and Barnett (1993) research study is based on a model that was presented by Hannan and Freeman in 1984, which includes both internal and external constraints on organizational change. Organizations exist as long as they are reliable and act rationally. When organizational goals are strong and institutionalized and the activities are routines, the reliability and accountability are high within the organization. However institutionalization and routinization also generate strong pressure against organizational change. This means, that the characteristics of organizations stability also generates resistance to changes. Changes disturb internal routines as well as connection with external stakeholders and both internal and external stakeholders prefer reliable and predictable performance. This means, that organizational change is hazardous and normally disturbs the equilibrium of the organization. Organizational change increases the failure rate of organizations, independent of the effects of the changed characteristics. The reason for this is that a change disturbs the routines in the company.

Kegan & Lahey (2001) described the resistance to change a psychological dynamic called a "competing commitment" as the real reason for employee resistance to organizational change. The change is not challenged, but rather is it resisted, or not implemented at all because the employee faces additional issue or concerns related to the change. When an employee's hidden competing commitment is uncovered, behavior that seems irrational and ineffective suddenly becomes stunningly sensible and masterful - but unfortunately, on behalf of a goal that conflicts with what you and even the employee are trying to achieve" .Competing commitments should not be viewed as a weakness, but as a version of self-protection. If these competing commitments are a form of self-protection, then what are employees protecting themselves from? Kegan & Lahey believe the answer usually lies in what they call "big assumptions" - deeply rooted beliefs people have about themselves and the world around them. Many rarely realize they hold big assumptions because they are woven into the very fabric of people's existence, and thus they accept them as reality. "these assumptions put an order to the world and at the same time suggest ways in which the world can go out of

order.Competing commitments arise from these assumptions, driving behaviors unwittingly designed to keep the picture intact

Bryant (2006),in his study on employee's resistance to change found different causes responsible for resistance to change. One or some of the below causes can lead the change to severe resistance from employees. The author opined that the consequences of employees' resistance are very important to be studied to reveal the miseries of resistance for organization and the change program. The consequences of employee's resistance to change range from; slow down of the change and thus increase in cost, less productivity (outcome), employees corruption, high employees' turnover, disturbance & trouble in change program, failure of change program, and in extreme situation it can even lead the organization to destabilization & breakdown. Organizations may face the above problems in change due to employees' resistance.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study is to find out the impact of relationship of a change agent with the employees in reducing the resistance and increase the likelihood of change adoption. It also studies as to whether any diverge from institutional status quo lead to decreasing in the likelihood of change adoption.

Analysis

The change itself has no substantive upside in the eyes of resistors, complying with the change agent's request for support requires resistors to refrain from acting on their unambiguously negative attitude toward the change solely for the sake of their relationship with the change agent. Likewise, to push the change through, the change agent has to disappoint close contacts, knowing that they see no benefit from the change. The intensity of a negative attitude toward a change initiative is shaped in part by the content of what is being resisted. Understanding resistance thus requires understanding what the change entails. Organizations embedded in the same environment, and thus subject to the same institutional pressures, tend to adopt similar practices We propose that the degree to which the change diverges from the institutional status quo in the organization's field of activity constitutes a boundary condition on change agents' realizing the benefits of strong ties to potential resistors. Namely, when implementing less divergent changes, affective cooptation is likely to favor a change agent, because it may persuade resistors to tolerate a change that does not

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Page 20

alter significantly the functioning of the organization. When the degree of change divergence is much lower, the advantages of strong ties accruing to the change agent are weaker, and may turn into liabilities that reduce the likelihood of change adoption. Two mechanisms account for this contingency. First, more divergent changes represent a greater threat for resistors, strengthening their opposition. Fence-sitters have a balanced view of the change's potential upside and downside, irrespective of the extent to which the change diverges from the institutional status quo. In their perception, breaking with taken-for-granted practices may greatly upset the organization but may also greatly improve it.

Conclusions

The study found that the effects of strong ties to potentially influential resistors on change adoption are contingent upon the extent to which the change diverges from the institutional status quo. The lower the levels of divergence the change entails, the more affective cooptation favors the change agent, because it increases the chance that the benevolence felt by resistors toward the change agent may persuade them to tolerate a change they do not approve of but which is unlikely to alter significantly the functioning of the organization. As the degree of divergence increases, however, not only does closeness to resistors have decreasing positive effects on change adoption, but it can have detrimental effects too, as the intense disapproval of close contacts increases the psychic toll change implementation takes on the change agent, dampening her own drive toward change. The findings demonstrate that the effects of tie strength can be contingent on whom the actor establishes a social connection with. The beneficial effects of tie strength were confined to actors with the potential to resist the change. These findings indicate the need to theorize with greater nuance about the contingent effects of different targets of strong and weak social connections in organizations. It encourages network and organizational change scholars alike to consider the affective interpersonal dynamics that underlie the effectiveness of individual agency in organizations while accounting for the nature of the change.

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Page 21

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Page 22

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Page 23