CHANGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES LEADERS FACE IN MANAGING ORGANIZATIONS

By


Introduction

The current trends in business activities around the world necessitate an organization to embrace change. Every organization formulates their strategies on how well they can position themselves in a better competitive advantage over others. In the process of getting to the position where they plan to be in future, changes have to be implemented as part of the strategy. Change management is a process of continuously renewing a company’s direction, framework, and abilities to provide services to all organizational clients (Moran & Brightman, 2001)

Change constantly occurs in organizations at all functional levels and every organization endeavors to bring about change for the betterment of all the stakeholders (Burnes, 2004). The need for management change has come about because of globalization and technological advancement. The current business environment is highly competitive and for an organization to survive and continue operating successfully it has to embrace change. The implementation of management change strategy is not smooth due to several factors that come in the way. Managers face challenges each day as they try to strategies and put in place the planned changes.
This study examines the similarities and differences of the management change strategies and identify the factors that affect their success in an organization. In addition, the challenges faced by the leaders who are responsible for management change will be analyzed. Management change goes hand in hand with the organizational strategies. This therefore requires the consultation or consideration of the laid down strategic plans whenever a change is planned or implemented.

**Change Management**

In order to become competitive and be able to stay ahead in today’s business world, every organization has to adapt to new changes and the top level management is tasked with leading the way in this process. Since business community is so dynamic and diverse, leadership model has to greatly change because there is so much expectation for continuous evolvement given the changing organizational and global dynamics. Organizations that respond faster to external environmental changes have a higher chance of survival than those who respond slowly (Devaki, 2008). The world today is changing at a pace that has never been experienced before and the conditions within which companies function is shaky and full of uncertainties that has come about with the increased competitive nature of business worldwide.

According to Jackson (2003), because of the competitive nature of business today, organizational leaders are expected to live with increasing intricacies, change, and diversity. Additionally, organizations have to be able to respond fast to change if they are to remain viable. Modern day leaders deal with dynamism stemming from changes in shareholders and stakeholder’s needs and
perceptions. Consequently, the role and approach of management is ever changing with the market dynamism.

Technological advancements have fuelled the fire of innovative leadership styles and the trend is expected to continue into the distant future. In this modern age, the business environment is ever changing and therefore leaders must recognize change and adjust accordingly by acknowledging the process as it affects followers. This process requires a pro-active approach of taking necessary measures to ensure the followers adjust in order to fit the new environment. For example, a change in technology (software upgrade) may necessitate re-training employees to facilitate the transition.

In the competitive business world today, a manager is faced with the challenges of adapting to the changes that may be in favor or against the mission and objectives of the organization. Change management enables the managers to effectively and efficiently handle the change within the organization. A leader tasked with implementing change has to have a complete knowledge of the intended change before undertaking one. They will have to pose some questions to themselves concerning the need for change and what the goals of the changes are. In addition, they have to have a plan on how they intend to implement the change within their organization and the possible risks involved with the planned changes. Applying an effective change management strategy therefore involves several steps. Organizational change is therefore a process that is conducted through the application of various strategies.
Change management strategies

To implement the planned changes in an organization, managers have to follow certain strategies which have to be chosen after considering the following: the need for the change, which is being impacted, how the people involved will be impacted and how long the change will take. The seminal work on change management strategies is grounded on the work of Benne’s (1961) known as taxonomy which is made up of three important approaches. These three strategies to be considered in this study are rational empirical, normative re-educative strategy, and power cohesive strategy.

Rational Empirical

Chin & Benee (1961) founded this approach in their seminal work which is grounded on the principles of the Enlightenment. During this period, thinkers encouraged the doctrine that human thinking could be used in a way to fight callowness and falls belief to build a better world. Thinking as a technique for change in a social system was also stressed during this time. Experienced persons are involved in assessing the system with the objective of making it more workable. It is understood that the change to be adopted by the system will be logical and benefit of the change has to be effectively demonstrated before the change. The people responsible for change assume that employees will respond by way of reason and logic.

This strategy is however criticized on the grounds that the proper rational should be considered along other variables when accounting for the behavior. In the same vein, the vigorously reasonable argument is not sufficient to influence behavior. It appears that while reasonable and moral values are essential conditions, they are not sufficient to bring about change (Chin &
Benne, 1976). This approach also ignores the fact that though the staff may be conversant with Change or the reason behind it they may still not like to Change because of the emotional troubles, adjustment issues that come with change.

Normative-Re-educative

This approach is based upon the connection that exists between experimental method and democratic principles. The presumption of this approach is that people must get involved in bettering themselves in the organization through re-education. Under this approach, it is presumed that the scientific skills created during the Enlightenment are mixed with the doctrines of American democracy. It is also presumed that conditions are examined tested and validated by those who cherished the doctrines of representation involvement and equality (Kitchener, 1999).

When this approach is contrasted with the rational empirical strategy it is found that whereas the data collection is done by a skilled person in this strategy, the same is conveyed to an expert in the rational empirical strategy. The basis of collection and analysis of data in rational empirical is conducted through the public method. Further, in contrast with the strategy of power-coercive in which the pressure for transitions is from the sources in power normative approach is an answer to social pressures from amongst teams involved. The re-educative approach on the other hand is concerned with teaching and learning aspects of intended and expected change.
Power-Coercive Strategy

As for the power-coercive aspect, the pressure to transition originates from those charged with authority. In this strategy, different factors and controls are used to make sure that the change is implemented. This kind of approach may not be able to win the hearts of those who are in the process of change (Wieland & Ullrich, 1976). When a change that comes through the use of power-coercive strategy is implemented it is hard to defend it as a product of legitimate power.

The power-coercive is founded on the application of power (Chin & Benne, 1961). The Power that exists in the organizational systems is influenced to implement change. The underlying assumption with this strategy is that people in the organization will change simply because they are depending on those in the authority. One problem with this approach is that employees are not consulted in the process of change but they are just surprised with the announcement of the new changes and are left with no option.

Factors that affect change management strategies in organizations today

Change can help an organization to better utilize resources and align the employees’ behaviors with the organizational strategies. Efficiencies created through change can also help an organization respond to the ever-shifting consumer demand. Change management is not a easy process for overhauling the organization. Besides the disagreements as to what factors most influence projects change, the existence of factors themselves can make it unwieldy and fruitless.
Employee Resistance

Since change threatens the status quo, employees and management resist embracing or adapting to the new changes. It is natural that people are not receptive to change and this attitude leads them to have difficulties accepting the change. Additionally, adjusting to new conditions requires particular behavior traits which they may be lacking. Employees may resist the transition because organizations are rooted in the structures of their tradition and technology. Employees are always accustomed to the past policies and procedures.

There are different factors that could potentially lead employees to resist change in any type of organization. One among them that has often been mentioned recently and as presented by Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnytsky, (2005) is cynicism. This is a general attitude of mistrust shown by the employees towards any motive of change by the management. Employees often resist change because they see the changes very differently than the management team. They feel as if change is unsettling and management views change as opportunity. Employees are going to be accustomed to the past policies and procedures. The relationship between staff and company is a two way commitment both stated and implied. This relationship can combat resistance through modeling behavior, aligning values, and creating open communication channels.

Management resistance

Many organizations fail to invest in the training and development of their managers making them unable to give their best. One of the reasons why companies are lacking in this area is because of the little knowledge they have concerning management change. They do not see it as skills
that are very fundamental to their effectiveness. Whenever corporations do not provide this crucial development, they only depend on short-term workshops, which are missing an actual organizational or business context. Managers tend to approach change with an already set of beliefs that result in making the problem worse (Waddell & Sohall, 1998). This arises because they miss to understand the approach in any systematic manner.

**Ongoing process**

Administering organizational change is hard because it is an ongoing process rather than an event (Price & Chahal, 2005). People always have a tendency of seeing the results of any activity right there and then. Change is not a sudden occurrence but it is a process that takes time to evolve. Because of this characteristic of change, both management and the employees resist it for lack of results there and then. Other factors such as single organization, behavior, industries, economic forces, and competitive climates can affect organizational change. Successful approaches seem to be those produced in accordance to the uncommon attributes and competitive condition of a firm and may include different parts of other successful strategies. Leaders should accommodate the idea that staff involvement in change is a long-term and continuous activity.

**Low morale or apathy**

There will be little to no achievement of any set goals of a proposed change if the morale or apathy of the stakeholders in the organization is low. Keeping employee morale during a change period is a not an easy process (Pearson, 1997). Change process is a difficult process, time
consuming and costly. Management has to gain all the support needed from the top at the same time gain the trust and confidence from employees to attain successful change. The process therefore, requires the support and participation of all those concerned. If the morale of the employees or the management is low, it will be very challenging for a leader to inspire and encourage them to embrace the proposal let alone implementation of the change.

Challenges leaders face in trying to manage change in organization today

The act of managing change in the organizations is one of the most crucial problems faced by the companies today. Seeking the real causes of change and ensuring that the process is carried out in a smooth way is very important to the success of today’s leaders. Experience has proved that those leaders who have taken up this challenge have succeeded. Each day leaders in all sorts of business enterprises face the dawning task of bringing about change without interfering with smooth running of business. Since efficient change management is about letting followers have an inside view throughout the course of the plan (Porter, 2011), leaders should make sure that the followers are involved in the entire way of the process.

Adjustment and improvement should be taken when introducing constant changes to the employees because changes are often, taken as confrontation to them. More often than not staffs do not receive the changes positively but sometimes leads to dissatisfaction. High anxiety leads to low performance which results in the reduction of job satisfaction. (McNabb & Sepic, 1995). Most organizational changes usually entail various kinds and phases of individual loss for the employees in the company. For instance, change often needs the time and effort to learn
something new which result in loss of time and energy that could have, been directed elsewhere. Although some may be receptive to the learning opportunity, many of them would not want to invest that time and energy unless they are not satisfied with the present arrangements or see strong merits to the proposed change.

**Lack of Resources**

Lack of resources is by far the most challenging factor faced by leaders in today’s organizations. Change management is a costly and time-consuming process. It cost many resources in form of capital invested, and time put in for the implementation of change. Every organization has to ensure that any proposed change will be commensurate with the benefits derived thereof. Resources are not only limited to financial and operations but it goes beyond to time invested. Should the employees feel overwhelmed and distressed by other factors such as time pressure and commitments, they may not be able to embrace change (Kerber & Buono, 2005). A leader entirely depends on the support and financial sponsorship of the change by the organization. Before the management accepts any proposal, the change agent has to show the full benefit of the intended change otherwise it will not be, approved.

**Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture shapes or controls the way people think, behave or react it is very critical for a leader in any organization to learn respect and value organizational culture because any changes proposed has a direct impact. Culture is compared to personality which is an ever and constant manner of behaving irrespective of any situation. Organizational culture and politics
can disrupt a planned change. Collaboration and cooperation are hard to achieve in many organizations frameworks and policies may not be approved in advance which ultimately hinders the change. Burnes (1996) agreed and noted that planned organizational change assumes the key stakeholders want the change implemented.

A successful leader of today’s organization has to understand the dynamics that entails corporate culture. A culture is build and strengthened over time and therefore it is crucial to fully, understand all the details of a culture before proposing or introducing any major changes. Any successful change management must, be integrated with cultural alignment. Proposed changes to behavioral settings that crossly go against corporate culture eventually fails. Conversely, those interventions that use the culture as the context for all change efforts will succeed.

**Communication Strategy**

Too often change management processes breaks down because of complacency and lack of a disciplined feedback characterized by difficulties. Communication is very significant tool in the implementation of change plans since it is used for making contact with all the stakeholders (Spiker, Barry, Lesser & Eric, 1995). There is every need of ensuring that means of communication is free from any interference within and outside the organization.

Armenakis, et al., (1999) proposes that the communication introducing the change should address key questions to set the stage for the change and to create readiness in the change participants. Effective Communication to employees is a big determinant factor whether
organizational change is, achieved or not. It is critical that employees are fully aware of the whole process of planned changes in the organization. This has to be made right from the beginning of the process for them to feel as equal partners in the implementation. The reason why employees need to be involved in the communication process is that they form a crucial part of the stakeholders in the organization.

**Resistance to change**

Proposal and implementation of change in any organization usually create mixed reactions in the minds of employees. This kind of reaction is often that of curiosity, fear, anxiety, and reluctance. Because of this mixed reaction from the employees, resistance to change should not be taken lightly by a leader or organization. Resistance to change is accepted as being a key factor to blocking the changes and this is one of the important causes of change failures (Mabin, Forgeson, & Green, 2001). This is one of the challenging tasks a leader faces in the process of change management. This process can be a critical issue in any organizations regardless of the age, growth, and strength. Most people regardless of age or level in the organizational hierarchy are not receptive to changes. They often tend to resist any sort of change that may be, proposed even before considering the advantages and disadvantages to them. Leaders are therefore faced by this resistance whenever any change is introduced in an organization today.

**Internal conflicts**

The presence of conflicts in organizational leadership is inevitable and the two cannot be separated. As conflict increases, the need for effective leadership increases (Kormanski, 1982).
To counter conflicts in organizations leaders have to be equipped with knowledge and skill in conflicts management. It is critical for the organization to train leaders and equip them with the necessary tools and techniques of addressing conflict. Because of the presence of internal conflicts in an organization, management is forced to invest funds in the equipping of the leaders with required skills to counter this challenge.

Peters (1987) supported flourishing on discord and noted that the key mystery that managers encounter is the need to advance internal stability in order to encourage change. He further emphasized the aspect of management that creates guidance by creating an inspiring vision. An internal conflict that exists in the organization is the greatest bottlenecks in the implementation of change. No change will thrive in the environment of misunderstandings and conflicts therefore making difficult for any leader to bring about changes.

**Lack of support**

The support from the top management is very essential to the implementation of the management change process. Behavior by the senior management team will also be essential as leading by example can guide appropriate behavior. Employees perceive changes as a threat to their work. Changes usually lead the organization or employees move out of their comfort zone. Because of this there will always be some people trying to come in between the process. The biggest challenge to a leader seeking to bring about change in today’s organization is lack of support from both the management and the employees. A change will prove to help in keeping the organizational cultural values; it will receive support even if it was originally unpopular.
(O’Connor, 2006). Sometimes management may not be keen on the proposed changes therefore slowing the process initiated by the leader who needs all the support he or she can muster from the top management. Employees have to support the process of change too otherwise it is bound to fail because they form a key position in the process. This lack of support from both the management and the employees come in the way of a leader’s quest in bringing about management change in today’s organization.

**Lack of clear objectives**

Lack of clear objectives in the organization, come in the way of change implementation by leaders in organizations today. For any change to succeed there has to be clear goals set by the leadership. These goals should be simple and clearly understood by all the stakeholders in the process. Employees will be receptive to the new changes when there are no doubts in their mind of what they are committing themselves to. To make clear the objectives of the change training and coaching should be conducted. According to Herold, Fedor, & Caldwell (2007) management of change strategies such as training that increase self-efficiency and commitment to the change increase in the importance as the amount of simultaneous and overlapping change in the surroundings increases. Lack of clear objectives affects the process of change in the organizations today and this proves to be a challenge to the change agents.
Conclusion

In the words of Jackson (2003), planning for purposeful systems should reflect the values of the widest possible constituency of stakeholders (p. 226). Consequently, every organization should thrive to fully involve everyone in the process of change. Employees should feel as part of any change introduced in the company because they are crucial to the growth and development of the organization. Jackson (2003) contends that managers can become more successful if they possess the capacity to view their organizations through varied lenses and have the ability to engage in the decision-making through an interactive planning process. Whenever changes are not embraced by everybody in the organization the effect will not only affect a unit but also will spread to the entire systems of the organization that is why all the stakeholders must be involved in the process so that they feel that they own the change.

In order to manage change effectively, information must be shared with employees and their concerns must be addressed as they surface. Management of change must motivate employees by creating a work climate that satisfies basic psychological needs to enhance intrinsic motivation. Thus, management of change strategies can encourage integration through which the regulation is assimilated internally resulting in self-determination and intrinsic motivation. Leaders in today’s organizations employee the different major change management strategies in trying to propose and implement changes across the organizations.

The process of management change in the organizations is not without different challenges encountered by the leaders in this quest. Each day as leaders are confronted with the task of
increasing the investment returns of the shareholders and harmonizing the different operational functions, they are required to implement changes which more often than not are not readily received by the followers or the management. There are myriad of challenges faced by the leaders such as lack of sufficient resources, corporate culture, low morale, lack of clear objectives, and lack of support among many. Even though most corporations are investing in programs and trainings aim at assisting leaders bring about change in the organizations, this process remains a daunting task for change agents and therefore a lot more needs to be done in effecting successful change in organizations today.
REFERENCES


doi:10.1080/01446190500227011


