Organizational change

SSQ Financial Group

Health *InSight*

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Introduction

Change is an integral part of every company's business strategy. Companies must adapt to change or risk falling behind. There are several types of change. Some, like the appointment of a new CEO, are more dramatic while others, like the launch of a new product, are part of the organization's normal operations and have less of an impact.

The factors of change are numerous. They include economic globalization, Asian market development, demographic transition, sustainable development requirements, acceleration of innovation, omnipresence of computers, NICT development, the need to share and develop partnerships, and outsourcing of tasks.

Regardless of the intensity of change and its target, the ability to manage change and its impacts is still a complex process. Several studies have shown how important it is for managers to have the necessary skills and competencies to ensure an effective transition. Other studies highlight a number of key factors that must be applied rigorously throughout the change process.

Two key aspects: speed and quality of change

The ability to evolve and change quickly and frequently without paralyzing operations has become an essential quality for every organization wanting to successfully implement a change. Change management is just as important to a company as management of clients, capital flows or resources. Change management competencies are becoming increasingly strategic for companies. The CEO and senior management must target these competencies when hiring managers or when setting up a change management team.

Because change disrupts the normal flow of things, it is difficult to grasp and get under control. Managers must be made aware of the need to develop competencies for managing change in their organization. Change and leadership go hand in hand!

Change management requires special competencies in terms of technical know-how and flexibility. As a manager, you no doubt have people with these competencies in your organization or even on your own team.

Skills required for transitioning change

Visionary leadership	Beyond what unique managers can do, visionary leaders unify their team and lead them toward a goal.
Maintaining organizational balance	Examine the relevance of each of the organization's activities and feel free to make any appropriate changes.
Relevance and judgment	A leader can disrupt organizational consensus by asking the right questions and having the courage to answer such questions.
Reckless boldness and courage	Leaders must be able to promote change by presenting it in a positive light and making it seem desirable in the face of resistance.
Persuasiveness	Continued observance of the organization's core value is recommended.
Ease of communication	Inform the key players and provide them with the support they need for a successful transition.

Types of change and their targets

Radical or fundamental change: Refers to a transformational change, a major review of the fundamental characteristics, such as its reason for being, mission and values.

Examples: new CEO or owner, low profits

Gradual or superficial change: Refers to the normal evolution of an organization (new products or technologies, etc.). Rather than having a fundamental impact on the nature of the organization, this type of change affects the operation's processes by enhancing or expanding them.

Change can always be PLANNED or NOT PLANNED

Organizational targets

- Culture
- Structure
- Human Resources
- Technology
- Tasks
- Strategies
- Reason for being
- Performance goals

Fundamental principles of change

Feelings of imbalance triggered by change within an organization can sometimes leave a bitter taste or wreak havoc the imbalance is not included in the organization's fundamental principles or partially controlled by them. Regardless of its intensity or target, change involves four principles that, once made known and understood, promote a good sense of balance. We are referring to the principles of:

1. **Comprehensiveness:** Change requires joint action based on the organization's values and vision.

2. **Disruption:** For change to take place, a period of imbalance has to be endured. In certain cases, the organization will have an easy time adapting. In others, the change will be virtually traumatic. Change creates worry, tension and an unsettled feeling. Change is not comfortable. Disruption is one of the initial goals, once the ultimate goal has been defined. A sense of instability is necessary, because it brings about positive management of risks and opportunities.

3. **Universality:** All the organization's employees must buy into the change in order for it to be lasting and effective. Universality requires all employees to propose, decide, act and be accountable based on their position in the organization. An information system must be top-down and bottom-up.

4. **Indetermination:** Change can be guided but not fully controlled. The change management method must be flexible yet precise and efficient.

Managing change successfully

Flexible yet precise and efficient methodology must be in place. Of the several methodologies that exist, here is one that has a 10-step process which should successfully get our team and our organization around a tight corner!

Change: a 10-step process

1. **Define the vision:** Set the goal for the change and determine how you will go about achieving it.

2. **Engage staff:** Create a mindset of change among employees, validate the issues included in the vision and define the main improvements sought.

3. **Be a catalyst:** Define the structure of the project and the associated method of functioning capable of supporting, facilitating and accelerating change.

4. **Be a guide:** Define and lead all the actions associated with the change process to ensure a successful outcome.

5. **Translate it into action:** Implement the change by bringing the vision to life in the employees' daily operational reality. In other words, change the structures, the ways of doing things… and obtain the desired results in terms of quality and quantity.

6. **Bring about participation:** Ensuring the participation of all employees involved will enrich the vision while facilitating its acceptance.

7. **Manage the emotional aspects:** Overcome resistance and obstacles to allow the change to materialize.

8. **Deal with any power issues:** Reorient the power relations to ensure their cohesion with the vision. Make them an effective participant in the change process.

9. **Train and provide coaching:** Apply both technical and interpersonal training to

help employees contribute to the change process under the best conditions and apply the vision to their daily activities.

10. Focus on communication: Foster expanded and organized communication that relies on the participation and involvement of all employees, driving the change.

Conclusion

• Change must continue to be a major management objective and responsibility.

• The ability to take advantage of opportunities and act promptly is a determining factor in an organization's success and longevity.

• Lasting change only takes place when all members of the organization sincerely buy into it.

• Change is "an event or occurrence that disrupts the normal flow of an organization or an individual. […] To adapt to change is to avoid being enslaved by repetition. […] Change allows a person to become, to be open to novelty, adventure, risk" (Grouard, 2005).

• Leaders are indispensable to change management and success.

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change." **Charles Darwin**

References

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Grouard, B. et Meston, F. (2005). *L'entreprise en mouvement, conduire et réussir le changement.* Paris : Éditions Dunod.

Arcand, M. (2007). *La Gestion du changement.* Montréal : Éditions Nouvelles.

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The following resources may also be informative with regard to organizational change management:

• Browse the FAQ

• Take advantage of Health *InSight* Support Services

• Turn to your company's EAP

• Confide in a qualified professional in case of emergency