

Why change programs always fail: the perspective of communication essays example

[Business](#), [Management](#)



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Introduction

With the changing conditions of the corporate world and the continuously advancing technology, the organizations need to stay focused. The globalization has broadened the scenario while increasing the global forces of competition. In order for the organizations to remain competitive, they need to be willing to adapt changes in their structure, process, technology or/and strategy depending on the necessary requirements of the time. In the modern era, change is considered to be the only constant element that plays a very critical role in the sustainability of the organizations. But not all the efforts driven towards change are successful and produce the desired results. A planned change refers to the change that is of strategic nature and is usually implemented from top to bottom; in this kind of change, most of the planning does not involve engaging the employees as change is only communicated to them (Frahm & Brown, 2007).

Over the past two decades, more than 100 companies have undergone transformation so that they can sustain the pressures from their competitors and survive successfully. These include the large organizations like Ford

Motors and smaller like the Landmark Communications, US-based companies like the General Motors and others across the globe like British Airways. The efforts undertaken by all the different companies have been done under various banners: reengineering, right sizing, total quality management, restructuring, turnaround and cultural change (Ponti, 2011). Despite all the varying organizational cases, the basic aim was the same: to make a significant change in how the business operates so that it may easily cope with the new and challenging environment of the market.

This paper aims at identifying the reasons why the change programs tend to fail in particular from the perspective of communication.

Communication and Change

One of the main reason due to which a planned change may fail is the inability of those affected by the change to understand and accept the change. The key mechanism that may help in enhancing the level of understanding and making the people accept the change is communication. Hence, communication can be considered as the most significant challenge for the change implementers as they need to design an effective program of communication that leads to the creation of understanding and acceptance by the recipient who are usually the workforce of any organization (The Essential Role of Communications, 2014). Both understanding and acceptance need to be created ideally before the change is introduced in the environment.

When an organization is going through change program, the communication facilitates and supports the change at all levels of the process. The ways

communication is involved in the change process is:

- It convinces the stakeholders about the benefits and the rising necessity of the change
- Translates the vision of the leadership in specific messages so that the needs of the stakeholders are communicated through most appropriate channels
- Used to encourage and empower all the participants involved in the process to adopt the required behavior for the successful transition of the change process

The first step of the change process is to understand that there exists a need for change; this leads to the creation of new behaviors that represent the values of the business pertaining to the future state. In order to drive change in the behaviors, the need for change must be communicated effectively to all those who are directly as well as indirectly involved (Vestal, 2011). The people who are involved in the change management process expect to be communicated what benefit they gain from the change.

The major issues arise when the change takes place from top to bottom; from the communication perspective this is more significant as the employees are not involved directly while the change is being planned and this is why they fail to understand why they have to leave their comfort zones to enter uncertain environment. If the employees are not properly communicated and the change implemented rapidly, higher gap arises between the current state and the future state due to which high resistance is faced.

The failure of change program is usually because there is a lack of clarity

and communication. Moreover, the communication gap is also accompanied by language challenges. When the management fails to align the organizational strategies or goals with the individual goals, or fails to communicate this alignment, the communication gap occurs ('Change is Hard to Handle', 2002). Everyone needs to be fully aware of what the long-term goal of the change is and in what ways the individual makes an influencing contribution. The fact is that organizations usually underestimate the need to build rapport and support with the staff.

How to Ensure Effective Communication?

Considering that the basic reason why employees seem to resist change is the lack of understanding why and how change has become inevitable, the implementers need to ensure effective communication within the organization. First of all, it is important to gain knowledge about the needs and interests of the target group. Specifically when the change is going to create controversies and impact the comfort zone of the employees, gaining knowledge about them becomes even more important so that different target groups can be sent tailored messages to make them fully understand the need for change (Brown, 2002). Another important aspect to be taken into consideration is that the communication needs to be situation oriented because individuals react based on the situations. Yet another prerequisite of ensuring effective communication for change is constant control of the entire process or continual evaluation. With regular process control, the management gathers data about the deficits as well as optimizations regarding the change program. If there is a lack in controlling the process,

resistance occurs and leads to failure in the change program eventually.

Another significant principle of effective change communication is the dialogue or two-way interaction between the recipients and implementers.

The most common mistake that occurs in the change communication is that the management or the organization fails to make sure that the process of communication is actually a two-way process ('Change is Hard to Handle', 2002). To make sure that change takes place successfully, the communication should be a dialogue where the needs of the recipients are addressed so that their opinion as well as suggestions are welcomed as a feedback.

Specially, in such a situation, making dialogue at a personal level where interpersonal relationship is maintained is more helpful as it contributes to rising job satisfaction and enhancing the morale of the employees. Moreover, ensuring that communication is two-way is significant as recipients of change become disappointed when the management or the implementers do not respond to their queries and feedback (Brown, 2002).

In conclusion, a failure to communicate the vision of the change program leads to a complete failure of the entire process. Bringing about a change means that the entire entity needs to be transformed to full or some extent and this cannot be possible until hundreds of people or the entire stakeholders involved are willing to help and be a part of the change process. The hearts and minds of those who would be affected cannot be captured until lots of credible communication takes place.

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