

Whether of this
relationship brings
enhanced job
satisfaction,



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Whether driven by competitive pressures, expansion needs, technological advances, industry restructuring, workforce demographic shifts or geopolitical realignments, organizations have continued to invest heavily in planned change processes aimed at enhancing organizational performance and competitiveness.

Although such change processes tend to be initiated and planned by top management, they unavoidably involve emergent features as people and groups at manifold levels of the organization make sense of the intended changes, renegotiate their content, and react to underlying issues and interests, resulting in a multiplicity of unintended ramifications (Stensaker & Langley, 2010). As such, it is imperative for any change process to be categorically planned to make certain that it achieves the intended outcomes. It is against this background that this paper evaluates how group dynamics can be used to assist in the change process. The term “group dynamics” is used in organizational settings to refer to interactions between individuals who have evolved a pattern of behavior, common culture, value propositions, attitudes, and expectations as a direct result of their continued interactions in a group setting (Burke, 2011). According to Boonstra & Gravenhorst (1998), “...organizational change processes are influenced by the institutionalization of power and behavior of interest groups in and around organizations” (p. 98).

As such, organizations can make use of the dynamics that are characteristic of these social structures to drive the change process forward. In a change intended to introduce a new organizational culture, for example,

organizations can positively use the informal influence a group exerts on its

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members through socialization, integration of values, and enforcement of norms, to develop a framework through which all members can be educated about the benefits of the intended change, hence reducing resistance (Coghlan, 1994). Group dynamics could also be used to promote teambuilding, which is fundamental in the formation of group responses to the intended change process (Coghlan, 1994). Mergers and acquisitions are always difficult for organizations, but group dynamics have been effectively used to enhance teambuilding and provide members of the acquired firm with a framework through which they are successfully integrated with members of the acquirer firm. This integration, which is successfully undertaken through group dynamics, helps organizations to leverage large-scale system changes experienced in undertaking the acquisition or merger. Organizational work teams are increasingly becoming racially and ethnically diverse, and group dynamics have been used to provide development, shared group learning and social support to members of these teams during times of change, hence increasing their identity to the values and objectives of the organization, reducing their resistance levels, and sustaining their productivity (Burke, 2011). While diversifying abroad, for instance, multinational corporations have often used group dynamics to establish group norms and shared culture among members of different cultural, ethnic, or racial orientations. The resulting cultural disposition is an effective tool that could be used to drive the change process forward because members within these teams develop a certain level of comfort, share similar expectations, and the shared culture acts to strengthen cohesiveness (Burke, 2011).

The impact of this relationship brings enhanced job satisfaction, trust, mutual respect, and stability within the work teams needed to leverage large-scale system changes triggered by drivers such as geopolitical realignments and international diversification urges. Lastly, it is a well known fact that groups dynamics provide members of ethnically and culturally diverse teams with a sense of belonging that is inherently grounded on the mission and objectives of the organization (Coghlan, 1994; Burke, 2011). As such, these members are often likely to forget their individual differences, aspirations and expectations during times of change and rally behind the organization's call to effect the intended change.

Should there arise any differences, the same group dynamics can be effectively used to hasten the process of consensus building through a well-defined structure of interaction. This advantage helps leverage large-scale system changes particularly in projects that may be perceived as benefitting some employees while disadvantaging others. A good example is the implementation of an organization-wide performance-based pay program.

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