

Leading change



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The word 'change' might sound very simple and easy to most of us. In reality, it is quite the contrary; to change is one of the biggest challenges faced by companies, both large and small, ever. Companies, in response to their internal and external challenges, are trying to make a transformation effort to be a better competitor. John P. Kotter, a Harvard Professor who has spent 30 years observing the process of change, came out with a journal and later a book titled *Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail*. His article is basically talking about what distinguishes between the successful effort and failed effort.

He believed that there is a critical difference between them. The journal article focused on 8 reasons/phases that companies should use as guidelines in order to succeed during the transformation process. This report will further critique and discuss about the journal content and methodology. *Article Critique John P. Kotter has come out with a journal of Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail*. This journal is containing an analysis of reasons of why do a lot of companies who have gone through a transformation effort tend to fail.

Along with those reasons, are phases or steps that companies need to consider before and during the transformation process. John P. Kotter discovered that there is a critical difference between those companies who were successful with the change effort and those who failed. Kotter came out with 8 phases and reasons that companies need to look at. These 8 phases can be distinguished into 2; the successful effort and the failed effort.

The summarized phases are: Phase 1: A Sense of Urgency According to Kotter, the first phase is the most important phase and is the phase where

most companies fail. It is when someone in the company noticed that there is vulnerability in the company and that person or department wanted to maintain or improve the success level of the company. In other words, companies need to identify the need to change. One could not agree more with Kotter that creating a sense of urgency is important to motivate people and people would not be motivated if there is not enough sense of urgency. Without motivation people would not help and the efforts are going nowhere.

Kotter also stated that it is very hard to convince people to change in which is backed by Dr. Keith Denton in his similar journal of Leading Change. They both stated in different words that people do not want to change because they want to maintain their status quo. Therefore, it is important that companies create a mindset that the status quo seems to be more dangerous than launching into the unknown. Phase 2: Forming a Powerful Guiding Coalition In this phase, Kotter is encouraging companies to make sure that they have a powerful group to lead the change.

This group needs to have the authority, power, and harmony in order to be effective. A lot of companies actually fail in this step because they were underestimating the difficulties of producing change and thus the guiding coalition with energy and authority. Kotter also said that is necessary to have a group that consisted of employees from different background. I have to agree with Kotter on this one, considering that groups with members from different background could see things from different perspectives.

This is definitely necessary in order to give assurance to employees from every background that the change is done for their interest not just a few groups of people. Phase 3: Lacking a Vision Both Kotter and Denton stated

that senior management and whoever in charge of the transformation process needs to have a very clear vision in order to achieve success. A vision helps to clarify the directions in which the organization needs to move. The wrong vision could lead into the wrong direction and waste of resources. Then, a strategy needs to be arranged aligned with the vision.

Phase 4: Communicate the Vision According to Kotter it is very important that companies are able to communicate their vision effectively by using any means necessary. Kotter stated that there are a few styles of communicating the vision in which he suggested that to be effective, companies need to spend a significant amount of resources to communicate their vision. In my opinion, it is not necessary for companies to spend that much money to communicate the vision. Spending too much money on it will be a waste of resources which will damage the company, even though it might not be very significant.

Although, I have to agree with Kotter that in order for a change to work, most people must be willing to help and participate otherwise it could head to nowhere. Phase 5: Removing the Obstacles It is actually quite a surprise for me to find out that the obstacles of changes that lie within the organization turn out to be the most dangerous one. Kotter explained that many organizations failed to remove the obstacles such as faulty organizational structure and wrong heads of departments. These are the obstacles that are constantly overlooked by companies since they are more focused on the external traits.

Though, the open-system theory clearly shows that companies need to look at both traits equally. Phase 6: Planning Far and Creating Short-Term Wins

According to Kotter, one aspect that prevents employees motivated is the non-apparent success of their effort. Employees need to be assured that their hard work is producing result. Focusing too much on the long-term goals will create a significant impact on employee's motivation. Therefore it is important for companies to create apparent success or short-term goals.

Kotter hit the right spot as it is a fact that many companies often overlook the shortterm improvements. Phase 7: Declaring Victory too soon Kotter found out that a lot of companies are actually being too satisfied with their progress and eventually declared the victory a tad bit too soon. Kotter thinks that it would create a setback for the company since it would discourage them to keep on improving. From my perspective, it could actually goes to both preventing companies to keep on improving or even motivate them in a way that they will perform better.

Phase 8: Anchoring Changes into the Corporate Culture Kotter thinks that changes would not be successful unless it is becoming a part of the corporate culture. It needs to be " the way we do things around here". I agree with Kotter that this phase is essential in order to succeed in the change. Therefore, companies are encouraged to articulate the connection between the new behaviors and corporate culture. These 8 phases actually revolves around the leadership theme which Kotter implied that a company's success is mostly because of the effective leadership.

An effective leadership plays a bigger role compared to the management structure. Therefore, to ignore these phases would likely to create failure to the change process. John P. Kotter has managed to discuss the matter very deeply and detailed which I think is very helpful for us to understand. He

provided very clear information and direction of what needs to be done in each chapter. Also, he provided many examples of what would happen if the steps are not done right. His journal, although it is written in conceptual style, has a very good value considering that he put many real-life examples as proves to its credibility.

His journal article, compared to the other authors, is much more detailed while the other authors like Denton are done from a broad perspective. Though, it is recommended to probably read a few of those broader articles before reading Kotter's to understand better what he really is talking about. Kotter's journal article actually opens a lot of doors for future research where other potential authors could probably talk about each step in much deeper, maybe one article each step.