The pervasive influences that drive change

Change is defined as pervasive influence, where all aspects are subject to continual change of one form or another (Mullins, 2005 , p. 909). Also, change is an inescapable part of both social and organizational life.

The concept of organizational change is in regard to organization-wide change, as opposed to smaller changes such as adding a new person, modifying a program. Examples of organization-wide change might include a change in mission, restructuring operations, new technologies, mergers, major collaborations, and rightsizing.

Change in organizational strategy is an attempt to alter the organization`s alignment with its environment. Organization change might also focus on any of the basic components of organization structure or on the organization whole design.

The Nature and Causes of Resistance to change

Employees resist change because they have to learn something new. In many cases there is not a disagreement with the benefits of the new process, but rather a fear of the unknown future and about their ability to adapt to it.

Forces of Change

The general environment is parted in to different dimensions: the international, the economic, te technological, the socio-cultural and the political-legal dimension.

External Forces

External forces for change originate outside the organization. Because these forces have global effects, they may cause an organization to question the essence of what business it is in and the process by which products and services are produced.

There are four key external forces for change: demographic characteristics, technological advancements, social and political pressures. Each component is discussed below:

Demographic Characteristics

The workforce is more diverse and there is a business imperative to effectively manage diversity. So, organizations need to effectively manage diversity if they are to receive maximum contribution and commitment from employees.

Technological Advancements

Technological changes are becoming increasingly important to many organizations, because of the rapid rate of all technological innovation. One major area of change involves equipment, thus a change in work processes or work activities may be necessary.

Social factor

Nearly all of the issues in change efforts revolve around people. You can change technologies, but unless people support the new systems, problems are bound to crop up. No matter how good a change seems on paper, if nobody will support it, it`s probably not good idea.

Political Pressures

Political events can create substantial change. Although it is difficult for organizations to predict changes in political forces, many organizations hire lobbyists and consultants to help them detect and respond to social and political changes.

Internal Forces

These forces for change come from inside the organization and may be subtle, such as low morale, or can manifest in outward signs, such as low productivity and conflict. Internal forces for change come from human resource problems and managerial behaviour (decisions).

Levels of Change

Mullins, (2005) argues that, change can be studied in terms of its effects at individual, society, group, organization, national and international level. However, because of this, change at any one level is interrelated with changes at other level, and it is hard to study one area of change in isolation. For example, when HSBC decided to embark on using new modern banking technology, it also embarked on training its staff on how to use that technology and its importance in their day to day activities, otherwise that technology could not help if employees could not support it or if that technology could not be friendly trough the costumers.

In addition, Hersey, (2006) discussed levels of change by identifying four levels: knowledge change, attitude change, individual behaviour change and organizational or group performance change.

Hersey , Robbins, (1990) commented on group and individual change, he argued that, at individual level, the change attempts is to affect an employee behaviour, through either training , socialization and counselling as strategies the management can use when they target at individual change. In that case of group change, he argued that, interventions such as sensitivity training, survey feedback and process consultation are some of strategies the management can use if it targets to group change.

TYPES OF CHANGE

There are two kinds of change according to Robbins, (1990), are unplanned change and planned change.

Unplanned Change

This change, is that change which can just happen, for instance, when managing director of certain company decides to resign immediately, is a type of unplanned change to the board of directors, as they are force to find another managing director as early as possible to run their company.

Planned Change

Planned change otherwise, is those changes which organization knows about: where are objective is to keep the organization viable and current. Mullins, (2005) argues that, most planned change is triggered by the need to respond to new challenges or opportunities presented by the in anticipation of the need to cope with potential future problems or external environment. It represents an intentional attempt to improve, in some way, the operational effectiveness of the organization.

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

Resistance is any conduct that serves to maintain the status quo in the face of pressure to alter the status quo. According to Goldberg (1999), individuals are not really resisting the change, but rather that may be resisting the loss of status, loss of pay, or comfort. They believe that " it is time that we dispense with the phrase resistance to change and find a more useful and appropriate types for describing what the phrase has come to mean that employees are not wholeheartedly embracing a change that management wants to implement"

In present economy, change is all-pervasive in organizations. It happens continuously, and often at rapid speed. Because change has become an everyday part of organizational dynamics, employees who resist change can actually cripple an organization. (Mullins, 2005)

Folgers &Skarlicki (1999) claim that " organizational change can generate scepticism and resistance in employees, making it sometimes difficult or impossible to implement organizational improvements". Resistance is an inevitable response to any major change. Individuals naturally rush to defend the status quo if they feel their security or status is threatened.

Why People Resist change in the workplace

In recent days, companies, government department and institutions, whether public or private, are no longer have a choice, they must change to survive. Unfortunately, people tend to resist change. It is hard to change an organization, let alone an individual. This puts increased pressure on management to learn the subtleties of change.

Employees and managers view change differently; top level management sees change as an opportunity to strengthen the business and to advance in their career, but for many employees, including middle managers, change is never sought after or welcomed: it is intrusive and disruptive. The below 10 reasons are the best describe why some people resist change.

Fear of failure

Resistance to change can be rooted in fear. Some employees may feel the need to cling to the past because it was a more secure, predictable time, during periods of change. If what they did in the past worked well for them, they can resist changing their behaviour out of fear that they will not achieve as much in the future.

Creatures of habit

Doing things in the same routine, predictable manner is comfortable. Asking people to change the way they operate or think is asking them to move outside their comfort zone. " We have always done it this way, so why do we need to change?" becomes the rallying cry for people who have difficulty changing their routines. In some cases, employees may deny or ignore the change simply because it requires them to experience something beyond their normal method of operation.

No obvious need

Some employees may see a change only from the perspective of the impact it has on them and their particular jobs. They may fail to recognize the positive impact of the change on the organization as a whole, not seeing the

big picture. Thus they may find the change disruptive and totally unnecessary. Their attitude may be, " if it is not broke, why fix it?"

Loss of control

Familiar routines help employees develop a sense of control over their work environment. Being asked to change the way they operate may make employees feel powerless and confused.

Concern about support system

Changing the organizational structures may shake their confidence in their support system. They may worry about working for a new supervisor, with new employees or on familiar projects because they fear that if they try and fail, there will be no one there to support them.

Closed mind

Some employees seem to have the attitude , " please do not confuse me with any facts or supporting documentation about this change: I have already made up my mind!" employees with this attitude approach the change process with their minds firmly made up, muttering , " no way!" during discussions and explanations of the future.

Unwillingness to learn

Some employees, hesitant to try new routines, express unwillingness to learn anything new. They may say, " I already know all that I need to know". Like resistant employees who have already made up their minds that the change will not be productive, employees reluctant to learn something new impede the organization`s growth and adaptation to change. They also hinder their own personal growth and development.

Fear that the new way may not be better

If things have been going wall, some employees may resist change because they fear that the change will not result in improvement. Focusing only on their part of the operation, they fail to realize that change is needed in order for the organization to stay competitive. Their current status is quite sufficient, and they wish to maintain business as usual.

Fear of the unknown

Employees can resist change simply because it is something unfamiliar. Not knowing much about the specifics of the change, they may imagine a worst case scenario, which might be very scary. They let fear of the unknown become their rationale for not giving the change a change. These employees may acknowledge that a problem exists and agree that a change might improve it. However, they worry that the proposed change might actually make things worse. Their fear causes them to place roadblocks in the movement toward change.

Fear of personal impact

Uncertainty is the biggest of employee resistance to change. In the face of impending change, employees may become anxious and nervous. They may worry about their ability to meet new job demands, they may think that their job security is threatened, or they may simply dislike ambiguity.

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING REDUCE RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

It is important for managers to learn to manage resistance because failed change efforts are costly. Costs include decreased employee loyalty, lowered

probability of achieving corporate goals, a waste of money and resources, and difficulty in fixing the failed change effort.

Involving people from the beginning, clearly explaining the reasons for the change, having a clear strategy, direction, and vision, and respecting the viewpoints of other people are all parts of the process. Using strategic measurement can also be way of building support.

Starting out with a problem, and working other people to come up with a solution, can be far more effective than proposing a specific solution and trying to rationalize it. People often do not like change they cannot control. However, if they lead or have a substantial influence on change, they are more likely to embrace it.

As the leader, you must take the time to understand resistance and you may have to come at it from several different angles before it is conquered. You must understand what your employees are feeling, as well as thinking.

Ways to reduce resistance to change:

Involve interested parties in the planning of change by asking them for suggestions and incorporating their ideas.

Clearly define the need for the change by communicating the strategic decision personally and in written form.

Address the " people needs" of those involved. Disrupt only what needs to be changed. Help people retain friendships, comfortable settings and group norms wherever possible.

Design flexibility into change by phasing it in wherever possible. This will allow people to complete current efforts and assimilate new behaviours along the way. Allow employees to redefine their roles during the course of implementing change.

Be open and honest.

Do not leave openings for people to return to the status quo. If you and your organization are not ready to commit yourselves to the change, don't announce the strategy.

Focus continually on the positive aspects of the change. Be specific where you can.

Deliver training programs that develop basic skills as opposed to processes such as: conducting meetings, communication, teambuilding, self-esteem, and coaching.

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

Employee resistance to change is a complex issue facing management in the complex and ever-evolving organization of today. The process of change is ubiquitous, and employee resistance has been identified as a critically important contributor to the failure of many well-intend and well-conceived efforts to initiate change within the organization. To close those gaps, managers should know how to face and overcome resistance to change. Although there are no certain solutions, several techniques at least have the potential to decrease or eliminate this resistance.

There are three key conclusions that should be kept in mind before recommending specific approaches to overcome resistance.

Firstly, an organization must be ready for change. Just as a table must be set before you can eat, so must an organization be ready for change before it can be effective. It is better to use survey to evaluate if a company is ready to undertake a change effort.

Secondly, organizational change is less successful when top management fails to keep employees informed about the process of change.

Thirdly, employees' perceptions or interpretations of a change significantly affect resistance. Employees are less likely to resist when they perceive that the benefits as a change overshadow the personal costs. At a minimum then, managers are advised to provide as much information as possible to employees about the change, inform employees about the reasons rationale for the change, and provide employees the opportunity to discuss how the proposed change might affect them.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In many cases, vast amounts of resources are expended by organizations to adjust employees to a new way of achieving desired goals. The natural propensity for individuals to " defend the status quo" presents a set of challenges that management must overcome in order to bring about desired change. Management must also seriously take into account and consider the myriad of problems that may result if they are not responsive to issues of resistance in workplace.

Generally, whatever the changes inside an organization might be, and whatever the reasons that made these changes necessary, a good way of implementing the changes successfully is for a manager to treat the participation and communication with his employees as integral parts of the change process.