

Reflective account on implementation of change process



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

This reflective account deals with implementation of a change management process at a workshop, where the author was employed for some years a few years ago. The workshop provides a range of electrical, mechanical and overhauling services to different departments of an industrial firm. It has separate departments for activities like electrical and mechanical work, fabrication, transmission and general repair and overhauling. The workshop was set up in the early 1980s and has its own accounting, administration and inventory functions.

The conduct of an efficiency audit revealed numerous deficiencies in the working processes of the workshop and the emergent need to implement significant changes for enhancement of productivity and achievement of (a) swifter turnaround time, (b) reduction of labour and (c) cost savings in various areas.

External consultants recommended the adoption of a sophisticated ERP system for coordination of various workshop activities and optimisation of its operations. The organisational management accepted these recommendations for the implementation of a modern ERP system and initiated processes for its introduction in the organisation. It was estimated that the adoption of the new system would lead to reduction of workshop strength by 30 employees, significant lowering of inventory levels, elimination of material shortages for workshop operations, and shrinking of turnaround time. The external consultants and the senior management of the company were convinced that the combined effect of these different advantages would result in substantial improvement in workshop productivity and profitability.

<https://assignbuster.com/reflective-account-on-implementation-of-change-process/>

The workshop manager was informed about the decision by the CEO and two board members and was asked to initiate and implement the change management process. He asked for some time to study the proposal and involved me and two other junior workshop managers in the exercise. We found in the course of our investigation of system features that whilst its introduction could certainly result in improvement of workshop productivity and efficiency, it would be very difficult for the existing workshop employees, many of whom had been with the department for years, to handle the complexities associated with operating the proposed system. It would be necessary to appoint some fresh individuals with expertise in handling such ERP systems and train other workshop employees in the operations and mechanisms of the new system. Concerns were also raised about the organisational implications of terminating 30 employees who had worked sincerely for the workshop for many years.

The change management group, headed by the workshop manager and staffed by myself and two other members examined the various implications of introducing and implementing the system and came to the conclusion that it would be necessary to recruit at least 7 fresh employees with requisite knowledge to implement and operate the ERP system. We felt that in such circumstances it would be better to remove 37 departmental employees and induct 7 ERP specialists in order to meet organisational objectives, both in areas of system proficiency and in reduction of employee strength.

The workshop manager and the rest of us in the change management team had some theoretical knowledge of Lewin's and Kotter's change

management process. We decided to implement the change management
<https://assignbuster.com/reflective-account-on-implementation-of-change-process/>

process in specific phases comprising of (a) informing the workshop employees of the proposed change process and its implementation schedule, (b) the implications of the proposed change on the productivity and efficiency of the workshop, (c) the various inputs that would be provided by the company to facilitate the change, and finally (d) the imperative requirement to reduce existing employee strength by 37 people and induct 7 specialist employees (Gary, et al, 1995, p 114).

Deliberating on the possible adverse repercussions of the decision to terminate employees, our group leader specifically sought a meeting with the CEO and asked him to accommodate the surplus employees in other areas of the company (Heller, 1998, p 37). The CEO understood our apprehensions and after discussions with the HR department was able to confirm alternative positions for 25 people on similar terms and conditions, but placed at different locations. Handsome severance packages were also worked out for the employees who would have to perforce be released (Heller, 1998, p 37).

The first task of the change management team concerned dissemination of information about the proposed change to all workshop employees (Joseph, 2006, p 24). The announcement about the impending change and its implications were made at a general meeting where all employees were asked to be present (Joseph, 2006, p 24). The announcement at this meeting was followed up by detailed meetings with smaller groups where members of the change management team individually informed workshop employees about the need for the change process and the ensuing benefits (Joyce, 2000, p 73). It was decided by us that the existing system would continue for <https://assignbuster.com/reflective-account-on-implementation-of-change-process/>

at least 3 months after the implementation of the ERP system (Joyce, 2000, p 73). The training of existing employees in the new system was delegated to external trainers and the change process was formally put into motion (Joyce, 2000, p 73).

The proposed change however met with very severe resistance from a section of employees, most of whom had been shortlisted for termination of employment or transfer to other departments (Moss, et al, 1992, p 67). Whilst approximately 20% of the employees chosen for release were reasonably satisfied with the carefully formulated severance package, the other 30 employees became vocal in their opposition to the plan and asked to see the CEO in order to vent their concerns and apprehensions. With employee relations in the workshop being happy for many years, the internal workers union had been disbanded many years ago. The workers however began to feel betrayed and vulnerable and started discussing the idea of forming a new workshop union with national trade union organisations (Moss, et al, 1992, p 67).

The CEO and the workshop manager had detailed discussions with the affected workshop employees but were unable to convince them to take up alternative postings, many of which were in distant places and required them to live separately from their families (Moss, et al, 1992, p 68). The breakdown in discussions between the workers and the management led to disruption in production schedules and made it very difficult for us to recruit new employees to operate the new ERP systems.

Such difficulties led to significant delays in implementation and to disruption of workshop activity (Joyce, 2000, p 81). The organisational management was however firm in its decision and arranged for subcontractors to compensate for the drop in workshop productivity (Joyce, 2000, p 81). Many of the existing employees also started feeling demoralised and started looking elsewhere for alternative employment (Joyce, 2000, p 81). It finally took the organisation more than a year to complete the implementation of the new ERP system and stabilise workshop production (Joyce, 2000, p 81).

Whilst the introduction of the system has resulted in significant improvement in workshop efficiencies, productivity and profitability, I do feel that the change management process could have been handled better (Buono & Kerber, 2010, p 4). My theoretical knowledge of change management processes informs me that successful change management needs to be planned very carefully and is dependent upon the effectiveness of communication with the people most likely to be affected by the change process (Buono & Kerber, 2010, p 4). I feel that the decision to introduce the system was pushed with too much haste and without allowing the employees to acclimatise to the change proposal (Frame, 2002, p 54). My colleagues in the change management team also agree with me that our communication of the various implications of the proposed change was possibly inadequate and did not instil feelings of the emergent need of bringing about the proposed change (Frame, 2002, p 54). Whilst the senior management of the company was committed to the change management process and extended all possible help, communication failures and hasty action at the operational level precipitated concern and crystallised resistance among employees,

which eventually resulted in implementation delays, loss of productivity and incurrance of subcontracting costs (Doherty, 2002, p 89).

I personally have learnt significantly from my experience and realise that theoretical knowledge of change management processes, whilst helpful for implementation of change, needs to be supported by strong management skills, clear and careful planning, preparation for contingencies and sound knowledge of employee behaviour for bringing about successful completion of change management initiatives.

Situation 2:

Reflective Account on Team Work and Leadership

I have had the opportunity to participate in a diverse team, comprising of individuals from different ethnic and national backgrounds, which was given the specific tasks of preparing a promotional and marketing campaign for an NGO working in different areas of environmental conservation. The opportunity came about because of my interest in environmental issues and the acceptance of my request to volunteer with a well known international NGO.

Teams comprise of groups of two or more individuals who work dynamically, adaptively and interdependently for the achievement of common goals and objectives (Arya, 1997, p 9). Members of such teams are usually provided with specific roles and responsibilities (Arya, 1997, p 9). Our team consisted of 7 members and we were given the task of working together for the creation of a marketing and promotional campaign for reduction of environmental pollution in and around airports in the UK.

The significance of team work for achievement of specific outcomes is now widely accepted in modern day organisational behaviour theory (Buller & Bell, 1986, p 305). Modern day organisations are increasingly making use of teams for improving organisational performance in increasingly complex and changing business environments (Buller & Bell, 1986, p 305). Organisational experts however ironically argue that whilst team work is now widely accepted as an important instrument for enhancement of organisational productivity and efficiency, many organisations that have built their operations around teams have found that the use of such teams very often results in little positive effect on organisational productivity. In some cases their use actually results in loss of productivity (Rees, 2001, p 19).

It has often been witnessed that teams with numerous high calibre individuals with demonstrated performance capabilities fail, even as teams of people with far more mediocre abilities often produce excellent results (Banker, et al, 1996, p 868). The modern day business environment is replete with examples of freshly started innovative and committed teams getting the better of large and established corporations with far greater resources (Banker, et al, 1996, p 868).

My experience of participation in a diverse team of people in a not for profit NGO environment provided me with the opportunity of understanding and appreciating team work mechanisms. Our team was significantly diverse with regard to gender, nationality, academic training, work experience and personality. The team consisted of six members Larry, Martha, Nora, James, (myself), Peter and Sheila. Larry, the oldest member automatically assumed the role of leader. Organisational theory and literature specifies that diverse

<https://assignbuster.com/reflective-account-on-implementation-of-change-process/>

teams lead to the availability of a variety of skills and perspectives (Brett, et al, 2006, p 84). These, if utilised appropriately, can result in significantly greater creativity and flexibility in creation of concepts, ideas, options and solutions in comparison with more homogenous groups and thus result in significantly better performance (Brett, et al, 2006, p 84).

Whilst teams with diverse members often have access to a wider range of skills, abilities and perspectives, they also face challenges on account of differences in attitudes, cultures, perceptions and languages of team participants (Brett, et al, 2006, p 86). Our team members came from the UK, Latin America, Africa and South East Asia. Their educational backgrounds varied from the performing arts to the liberal arts, sciences and management. Whilst three of the group, including myself had experience of organisational work, the other four were fresh from college.

The leadership of the team devolved upon Larry, who was the oldest and most experienced team member (Olmstead, 2002, p 79). This development actually took place, without his actively seeking it, because other team members came to him on their own for advice and suggestion on the functioning of the group (Olmstead, 2002, p 79). Leadership is an extremely significant element of team work processes. Much of the credit for both successes and failures of teams is given to leaders and to their decisions (Olmstead, 2002, p 79). Leaders are required to communicate with clarity on the goals of the teams, provide team members with appropriate and specific roles, build environments of cooperation and collaboration, encourage communication between team members, generate commitment towards achievement of team objectives and create atmospheres of inclusiveness by <https://assignbuster.com/reflective-account-on-implementation-of-change-process/>

involving team members in various discussions and asking them for comment, feedback and suggestions (Rees, 2001, p 42). Leaders often appreciate the roles of team members in order to motivate them to perform better in their tasks (Rees, 2001, p 42).

Whilst leadership devolved upon Larry without his asking for it, he certainly did not disregard his responsibilities and worked for the development of an efficient, cooperative and focused team that was committed to its objectives (Ephross & Vassil, 2005, p 109). All of us were given specific responsibilities for the development of the marketing and promotional campaign on airport pollution. We were asked to meet on determined dates, provide updates on our progress and asked to contribute by way of suggestions on the work of other team members (Ephross & Vassil, 2005, p 109). I was asked to research information on legal aspects of airport pollution, assess the work of other team members, and help them in achieving their objectives (Ephross & Vassil, 2005, p 109).

Our team activity required members to engage in extensive discussions and generate numerous ideas and concepts for the campaign. Some of these sessions led to disagreements and even quarrels, which resulted in some members refraining from talking to others for some time (Olmstead, 2002, p 92). Nora, who was otherwise very friendly and outgoing, could not stand being opposed and would become excessively argument if she was contradicted by others. Larry would on such occasions take her aside and explain to her the necessity of collaboration and pleasantness between team members for effective team effort (Olmstead, 2002, p 97).

We were asked to prepare the campaign in a period of six weeks and were happy to find that the job was completed in time despite arguments and delays. The marketing campaign was presented to the board of the NGO on the predetermined date. Larry deliberately chose Nora to handle the presentation, even as all of us were present to answer questions on our areas of work. We were at the end of the exercise happy to know that we had succeeded in our team objectives despite our diversity and our different social and cultural backgrounds.

The results of our team reiterated that teams with diverse members could excel in areas of creativity if they were led with sincerity, provided with transparent environments, and encouraged to communicate and collaborate with each other.

Section 3:

Reflective Account on Motivation and Reward

This reflective narrative concerns my experiences of working with a HR consultancy organisation entrusted with the task of formulating a reward and remuneration programme for textile workers in Bangladesh. The client of the HR consultancy services operates a garment manufacturing factory that is situated on the outskirts of Jessore, a small town in western Bangladesh. The organisation creates garment designs in their London studio and produces the garments in Bangladesh in a subcontracted factory with local Bangladesh labour. The produced garments are subsequently sold to clothing retailers across the UK and in some towns in Germany.

The recent stress on sustainability in business operations in the UK has resulted in substantial pressure from UK clothing retailers and consumers for ensuring of sustainable manufacturing practices at the workplaces of outsourced suppliers and manufacturers in developing countries (Marks, 2005, p 7). The organisation, in response to market demand, conducted an internal HR audit and found both working conditions and the remuneration of workers at the factory in Bangladesh to be significantly below acceptable norms. Workers, both male and female, were being paid salaries of approximately GBP 20 per month, which were 15% lesser than the minimum wages specified by the Bangladesh government. The factory operated in two shifts of 10 hours each, even as the maximum legal time of a shift was 8.5 hours. The HR audit also revealed deficiencies in working conditions in areas of sanitation, availability of water, separate washrooms for men and women and crèche facilities for working mothers. The internal audit also revealed that some of the workers appeared to be a bit too young for taking up such strenuous work, even though HR records revealed that all workers were above 18 years in age.

My organisation was given the brief of formulating suggestions for improvement of working conditions, rationalisation of remuneration and improvement of motivation of workers at the outsourced production centre in Bangladesh. I was a member of the small team of three that was entrusted with the responsibility for making a primary study on the issue and develop workable solutions that would serve sustainability objectives without placing undue financial pressure on the management of the company.

Modern day HR theories are informed by the work and theories advanced by psychologists and behavioural experts like Maslow, Herzberg, Vroom and McGregor. Maslow's well known theory of needs states that individuals essentially work to satisfy their needs, which progress from basic physiological needs like food, clothing and shelter to safety and security, love, status and esteem, and finally to self actualisation (Maslow, 1954, p 11). Herzberg's theory of motivation on the other hand states that individuals are influenced in their job choices by two distinct sets of conditions, namely hygiene factors and motivation factors. Hygiene factors represent issues like salary, security, workplace reputation and general working conditions (Herzberg, et al, 1993, p 21). Motivation factors on the other hand consist of issues like potential for learning and growth, scope for enhancement of responsibilities and official recognition for efforts of employees (Herzberg, et al, 1993, p 21).

Our team found, whilst analysing the remuneration levels and working conditions at the client's factory in Bangladesh that the workers lived lives of basic subsistence and were just about able to meet their physiological needs with their existing salaries. Most of them lived in low quality slums and did not have the resources to buy liveable houses. The application of Maslow's theory of needs in such circumstances led to the conclusion that the workers would be ready to put in significantly greater efforts in order to satisfy their physiological and security needs and work even harder to achieve their status and esteem needs.

The application of Herzberg's theory revealed that the workers did not at the time of the study have access either to hygiene or to motivation factors.

<https://assignbuster.com/reflective-account-on-implementation-of-change-process/>

Their working conditions were poor, their salaries were low, and there was little scope for career progression, reward or recognition. Apart from such circumstances, it was also evident that the owners of the sub-contracted manufacturing facilities at Bangladesh were deliberately contravening governmental rules and regulations with regard to minimum wages, time of work and also possibly utilisation of underage labour.

It did appear ironical to all of us that whilst people in the UK were concerned about the application of modern day HR theories and the work of Maslow, Herzberg and McGregor, people in the developing countries continued to work in extremely difficult conditions just to survive and meet the very basic needs of their families and their own selves. It was also very obvious that outsourcing by the client organisation to Bangladesh had been done primarily to exploit the low wages in the region. Any recommendation to improve the wages or the working conditions of the workers was bound to lead to greater costs, reduction of profitability and negation of the basic reasons for shipping the work abroad.

Members of our team however understood that growing pressure from environmentally conscious buyers and final consumers was bound to create pressure on firms that shipped work to low wage regions to improve the working conditions of their workers (Latham, 2006, p 47). We thus formulated a detailed report recommending the improvement of wages to 20% higher than minimum wage levels and the construction of a scheme to reward sincere, efficient and productive workers. We recommended the establishment of washrooms, canteen facilities and crèches and the reduction of daily working hours to 8 hours a day, with overtime payments at <https://assignbuster.com/reflective-account-on-implementation-of-change-process/>

established rates in case operations at the facilities had to be conducted for longer hours (Latham, 2006, p 47). We also recommended the establishment of a performance appraisal and management system for locating good performers who could be shortlisted for more responsible positions in future (Latham, 2006, p 47).

We explained in detail in our report that the implementation of such measures would lead to significant organisational benefits, both in the market place and at the manufacturing facilities (Armstrong, 2006, p 5). Awareness of sustainable manufacturing practices among buyers and consumers would lead to improvement of reputation and increased demand for products (Armstrong, 2006, p 5). The implementation of the recommended measures at the workplace would also lead to improvement of productivity, reduction of wastage, lesser absenteeism and greater commitment among members of the workforce (Legge, 2004, p 16). Compliance with governmental regulations on the other hand would reduce the liability of prosecution and the levy of significant penalties (Legge, 2004, p 16).

We were happy to find that the suggestions in our preliminary report were accepted with openness and appreciation by our clients. The clients called us for a detailed meeting wherein we explained of the likely benefits of adopting more worker-centric policies to organisations that shipped work to low wage regions. We provided the example of Nike and the extensive critical media reports on the company after the publication of exposes on the abysmal working conditions at its factories in South Asia (Dusen, 1998, p 1).

The senior management of the company assured us that they would initiate <https://assignbuster.com/reflective-account-on-implementation-of-change-process/>

plans to improve working conditions at their facilities in Bangladesh in line with our suggestions.

I think of my experience in working on the project as one of the most rewarding and fulfilling episodes of my working career. It showed me how modern day HR theories can be used to good effect in different types of situations and workplaces. It not only gave me the opportunity to practically use my theoretical knowledge on motivation and reward but also gave me the chance to make a difference to the lives of people who work in difficult conditions for survival and subsistence.