Change in organisations: triggers, leadership and resistance

Introduction:

Change within an organisation is often inevitable. In order to continue growing as a company they must be everchanging. An organisation must be open and willing to bring about change programmes if needed to ensure that they are working as efficiently as they can be. While the change process seems straight forward and easy to understand in most cases, it can always vary from organisation to organisation. For the purpose of this assignment I will reflect on the quotation given to us and acknowledge what I believe it takes to bring about change in an organisation.

" Faced with changing markets and tougher competition, more and more companies realise that to compete effectively they must transform how they function. But while senior managers understand the necessity for change, they often misunderstand what it takes to bring it about" (Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990)

Firstly, I will begin by reflecting on the start of the quotation. I will discuss the triggers to organisational change that go along with the two mentioned in the quotation, " changing markets and tougher competition" (Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990). I will split the triggers up between internal and external factors that trigger change. I will then begin speaking about the role of a leader in the change process and how I believe it is not always necessary for senior management to lead the change process. Senior management don't always know the best way to bring about change in the organisation, therefore I believe the role should be given to whoever understands the company the most.

I will then go on to discuss resisting change in terms of individuals or organisations. There is a difference in the reasons why an individual would resist change and why an organisation may resist change. If there is resistance to change in an organisation, the leaders of the change, whether they are senior managers or not, must find ways of dealing with this, so they can continue the process of change in the company. I will discuss a few ways an organisation can deal with resistance.

I believe effective communication is one of the most important elements in change operations for a company. Without communication throughout all

levels of the organisation, change will most likely not occur. I will discuss this further and describe the best way to ensure effective communication can be met by all parties in an organisation.

Triggers to change:

As described in the quotation given to use for the assignment, " Faced with changing markets and tougher competition, more and more companies realise that to compete effectively they must transform how they function." (Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990) it is clear that the two main triggers for change are competition and changing markets. There are countless other factors that trigger change in companies other than those mentioned. We discussed many different reasons, both internally and externally, for a company wanting to change their organisational structure. The reasons discussed in the quote would both be classified as external factors (i. e.: competition and change in markets). I will discuss both the internal and external triggers that are not mentioned in the above quote.

Internal Factors:
An internal factor would be classified as a change that occurs within the organisation that in turn cause changes that must be addressed. Internal factors are usually obvious to the entire company. One example of an obvious internal factor would be if there was a new CEO or senior manager introduced or alternatively if there was a change in balance of power. By having a major shift in top management, all lower levels of the company must change to coincide with top management. When new top management join a company, they bring with them a certain amount of new techniques and skills. They may use these different techniques to do what they believe

will allow the company to compete better within the industry the are located. Change would be inevitable in this case.

Another internal factor that may trigger organisational change would be if it was found that there was high employee turnover or low employee morale within the organisation. This factor indicates that there is a problem in the organisation that must be fixed quickly to ensure that the company stays competing in the industry, which according to the quote from Beer, Eisenstat and Spector (1990) is very important to an organisation. If an organisation has these factors, they are heading down a path that will ensure the breakdown of the organisation either by losing revenue or by losing employees. If an organisation does not begin changing to counteract these problems, they will have severe problems.

Another factor that will trigger change within an organisation would be a takeover, merger, acquisition, etc. While an acquisition or a takeover happens out of no where and it cannot be foreseen, and a merger is usually known beforehand and can be planned for. However, the company will have to change drastically in any case. These change in business structure will cause major changes in how the company will operate which will have to, in time, be learned by all employees. Changing operations as the company structure changes is vital to ensure that they do not get over whelmed by the changes.

External Factors:
Along with the internal factors that may cause organisational change, there are many external factors that could also cause change. In the quote given

to us as part of this assignment, two external factors are mentioned that may cause change to have to happen. These being, changing markets and tougher competition emerging. These are big factors that a company must monitor to ensure that if change is necessary that it occurs. The reason tougher competition emerging would affect how the company must operate is very clear. If the company believes they can't compete within their industry anymore, they must see if they can find changes that if made, would allow them to begin competing again. This is important to ensure the other organisations in your industry do not begin to over take you to the point where you would not be able to catch up with them.

Changing markets, as I said above, is another external factor that will encourage an organisation to change. Markets are continuously changing in todays society and if an organisation doesn't change along with the market, they will be left behind and forgotten about. To continue leading a market you must be open to changing what needs to be changed at any moment.

Another factor that I believe would initiate a company to change would be if there was a change in the demands or requirements of the customers. If it becomes apparent to an organisation that they are no longer meeting the needs and/or requirements of their customers, they must find a way to change to meet these needs again. Customers will begin losing interest in your organisation if you do not have them as first priority. If you begin losing customers, your organisation will lose revenue.

Leadership in change operations:

With the majority of operations that occur within organisations, senior management are at the forefront and may need to lead the operation. This is no different when it comes to change operations that must occur in an organisation. Change is very unsettling in an organisation and most employees at any level will turn to the CEO or senior management for some leadership and understanding (Jones, Aguirre and Calderone, 2018). Change operations cause major disruptions within organisations and if not properly led, will be detrimental to the employees and management of the organisation.

Senior managers must know the difference between managing the change operations and leading the change operations. This is a common mistake and can be the cause of senior management " misunderstanding what it takes to bring it (change) about" (Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990). Management is about bringing about predictability and stability within the organisation through planning, budgeting, organisation of both employees and operations, and problem solving. It allows employees to be secure in knowing that they are being looked after and managed effectively. On the other hand, leadership is about establishing a direction or vision, it is about aligning people in specific ways and motivating and inspiring employees. Leadership will bring about change more so than management will because by being a leader you are inspiring employees to do as you do, and they will have more faith in following you.

While I believe it is very important for senior management to understand how change is going to occur in the organisation and why it must occur, I

also believe the role of leader in bringing about change does not necessarily need to be on senior managers. It is common for senior management or CEOs to not fully be aware of the workings on each level of an organisation as much as say a general manager would. The reasoning behind this, I believe, would be that general managers work more closely to employees than senior management or a CEO does.

In a case study carried out by Beer, Eisenstat and Spector (1990), it was shown that the CEO carried out a change program for his organisation, however it was quickly seen that the programme had gone wrong. In two years, no change had occurred despite effort by the CEO being put in. It is clear that organisations in modern society are moving from the hierarchical and bureaucratic model of organisation to what is known as a task-driven organisation where what has to be done governs who works with whom and who leads (Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990). It is no longer necessary for change to be made from top down though the different levels of organisation where the leader would be whoever is at the top of the organisation at the time.

Resistance to change:

Change can be a very scary thing within organisations because it can go very well or very wrong, which could be detrimental to an organisation. For this reason, individuals may resist change. This can be done for many reasons including the one I described above. Some basic reasons an individual may resist change include:

- Habit

- Fear of the unknown (Tanner MBA, 2018)

- Social Anxiety (Having to join a new team)

- Loss of status or job security in the organisation (Tanner MBA, 2018)

- Organisational Politics (Tanner MBA, 2018)

While some of these reasons seem minute in the scale of organisational change, if an individual becomes resistant for one of these reasons, the whole operation may fail.

Not only can an individual resist change, an organisation may also have reasons to resist change occurring. Some examples of organisational resistance include:

- Potential loss of group power bases

- Entrenched interest of stakeholders

- Lack of organisational resources

- Lack of organisational capabilities

Organisations but be fully invested in the change operation if they are to begin changing. If there is any bit of resistance by the organisation, then there is no point bringing about the change because a failure may result in loss of revenue or loss of confidence in the organisation. While the company may " understand the necessity for change" (Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990), they may not always be ready for it to occur. This is when resistance will occur throughout the organisation.

Dealing with resistance:
If it is 100% necessary for an organisation to change, then they must begin dealing with any resistance that may occur throughout the organisation by

individuals. One way of dealing with resistance of an individual would be to involve them in the process of change (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1989). Allow them to participate in designing a change programme. By doing this you are allowing the individual to understand every aspect of the process which may alleviate any resistance they have. People who commit to change will be less likely to resist it, by getting individuals at all levels of the organisation to commit to the change, resistance will be less likely.

It is very common for individuals to resist things they do not understand. If the employees do not understand why the organisation is changing, what the change process consists of or what will happen after the change, they will be more likely to resist the change altogether. The members of an organisation who have been put in charge of the change process could begin by educating the rest of the organisation on everything that is to happen in relation to the change (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1989). If the leaders of the change engage with the individuals who are opposed to the change, they can see what exactly the people's concerns are and in turn find ways to encourage people that this change is the right decision based on what they said (Paycor. com, 2018).

If nothing will work in trying to stop individuals resisting the change, and the change is completely necessary for the organisation and cannot be avoided, the leaders might begin coercing employees into agreement. This can be done by denying individuals promotions or transfers if they are requested. While this may seem like a very drastic measure to take which may leave individuals angry, if the organisation has no other option than to change,

they must ensure it occurs whatever it takes. It allows for a quick fix for the organisation. (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1989).

Communicating change:

One of the major problems when change is occurring in an organisation is communication the change process and applications throughout each level of the company whether it begins at senior management or at a general manager. For change to occur effectively without failure, communication between each level and between employees and management is vital. The only way communication is effective is if the receiver completely understands and comprehends the message that has been sent/communicated to him/her.

Senior management are usually very far removed from the general staff in an organisation, so may find it very difficult to effectively communicate to them. If senior management have agreed to bring about change, they must ensure every single person in the company know about the change and more importantly comprehend it. On the other hand, is it also very important for employees and general managers to be able to communicate any problems or reservations they have. They may have these reservations due to the process decided by senior management being unsuitable for the organization. Sometimes it becomes clear that senior management are not fully aware of the inner workings of the company and this may result in disconnection between the process and the organisation. ".. they often misunderstand what it takes to bring it about." (Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990). I agree with the statement made by Beer, Eisenstat and Spector. I

believe it is very common for senior managers to not understand what exactly needs to happen in order for change to happen.

For effective communication throughout a change process different criterion must be met. If all the criteria are met, it is more likely that the communication will be completed correctly. According to an article written by Susan M. Heathfield (2018) for thebalancecareers. com, there are four components to communication that must work together to create shared meaning.

- Firstly, the person sending the message must present it very clearly to the receiver and in detail that they can comprehend. The must also " radiate integrity and authenticity" (Heathfield, 2018).
- Second of all, the receiver, whether it be senior management or employees, must decide to listen very closely to what message is being presented to them by the sender. The must be willing to ask questions to ensure they have complete understanding of the message.
- The third component speaks of the delivery method used for communication. The method must be chosen based on the type of message that is being communicated. It must suit both the needs of the sender and receiver, who ever they are in the organisation or beyond.
- Lastly, the content of the message being communicated is very important. It must resonate with the receiver in some way and on some level. The information within the message must answer exactly what the receiver wants to know. This will avoid any return messages

to the sender looking for more information which would take up

unnecessary time.

It is very rare for all four of these components of effective communication to

be met, but I believe that without effective communication in some shape or

form, the desired change efforts will fail.

Conclusion:

The change process will differ greatly from company to company. What will

not change is the elements that must come together for a company to

ensure a successful change implementation. The four elements I have

addressed within this assignment, I believe, must be understood, managed

and maintained if there is any chance of the change operations being

successful.

Firstly, I spoke about the triggers that may cause change. From reading the

quotation given to us, it is clear what Beer, Eisenstat and Spector (1990)

believe to be the important triggers of change for organisations. I agree that

" changing markets and tougher competition" are big triggers to change,

however I believe there are numerous smaller triggers that are just as

significant. I went through these triggers and split them up between internal

triggers and external triggers for a clearer understanding.

Secondly, even if senior management often understand why change needs

to occur, they often do not understand how to achieve this. It highlights the

importance of having a proper leader who understands what it takes to lead

the change. It doesn't necessarily have to be the top management that leads

the change. I believe it must be the person who understand the business and what they need to bring the change to reality.

Thirdly, I spoke about the resistance to change that usually occurs either by an individual employee or by the organisation as a whole. I highlighted these within the assignment because I believe they are the biggest cause of change failures within organisations. Unless a company understands how to deal with the resistance that occurs, they will not be able to proceed with change operations.

Lastly, I brought in the importance of communication in change operations. If there is a lack of communication throughout the organisation, there will be numerous problems that will begin to appear. I went through four components that, if completed, will ensure more effective communication lines within the organisation. Communication allows better understanding of the processes that are going on throughout the organisation which, as stated by Beer, Eisenstat and Spector (2018), is a bit problem that needs to be addressed for senior managers who think their company must transform.

As a whole, I agree with majority of the quotation given to us. I believe it touches on a very small fraction of what change operations may consist of and I believe I have touched on more of what it takes to bring about a change process within an organisation.

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