

Reducing resistance to organisational transformations



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Every organisation goes through a period of change and development at one time or another whether these be big organisation mergers, such as companies being bought out such as when Coca-Cola bought Costa coffee for 3.9 billion pounds, (The Guardian, 2018) or small changes such as an alteration to a software a company uses or the development and implementation of autonomous machinery that helps create an increase in productivity. It has long been argued that companies should apply a participative dialogical approach to manage these changes to help prevent resistance to these changes. (Jabri, 2015) However, there is the possibility that this will be resisted due to psychological reasons or self-interest. This essay aims to find out if psychological reasons or self-interest make it impossible to have a truly open and participative approach to organisational development? While looking at how leadership plays in to preparing and guiding through an organisational development. Despite probable positive results, it is more common than not for change to be resisted in one form or another. This can be down to the process of transformation being seen as a confusing, unsettling and stressful time for all those involved. (Lawson & Price, 2003) This resistance can influence the overall outcome of the organisations change. With around 70% of organisational developments failing, (Doherty & King, 2001) it is imperative to find out if a dialogical approach can in fact reduce resistance to the changes.

One factor that can affect organisational transformation is self-interest, which has been classed as one of the major motivators of human kind. (Hendry, 2005) This is when a worker is viewed as only looking after their own self-interest, this has been described as a worker who is excessively

concerned with his/her own personal needs, desires or welfare, rather than that of the wider environment. (Ahmad, 2018) So, it is possible that self-interest, linked with self-preservation can lead to concerns within an organisation during the time for change and could possibly lead to resistance of the development, due to fear of repercussions, especially if there are undesirable perceptions of the outcomes of the change. Especially if there is a history of failure of organisational development. (Battilana & Casciaro, 2013) However, it is also possible to argue that in some cases, self-interest can be connected to greed and selfishness, in this case it could have a negative impact on the interest of others or widely accepted moral values, (Ahmad, 2018) this could be because an individual acts only to protect their own benefits or as a way to enhance theirs, without having a care about what possible impacts this could have on other people or the interests or objectives of the organisation. (Van Dam, et al., 2008) In some cases political behaviour can emerge while the organisation is developing because that change is not in the best interest of a few individuals, while in reality is best for the organisation as a whole. (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1989) for example merging two offices and laying of a few staff members to reduce overheads and increase productivity may in turn reduce to strikes and walkouts.

It is also possible that psychological reasons can cause resistance to organisational change, due to a fear of the unknown. (Forbes, 2013) This can occur when a change is implemented without adequate warning. When a change or development is introduced without giving people adequate warning this can lead to a fear of the unknown while not providing any help through the change and guidance to help the workers understand what the

change will mean for their jobs, or how their working process may differ. This could possibly lead to people resisting the change because of this fear of the unknown. (Dent & Goldberg, 1999) Moreover, if the changes involve technological advancement, such as machines taking over manufacturing, employees will fear that their skills might be made obsolete. This can cause great fear even when training is made available, these employees might still feel that they are replaceable. (Armentrout, 1996) Fear of change comes from a rational place. People fear change because often it's down to them questioning whether where they are going is going to be better than where they are at the moment. In business, circumstances can force change all the time. (Rami, et al., 2014) Ultimately, the process of change depends on the leadership of the management. Unfortunately, change must happen, or the company may close, as failure to change prevents organisations from adapting to the changing environment around them. (Kanter, 2003)

Both of these can cause a resistance to organisations development.

However, can a dialogical approach prevent negative effects? Firstly, looking at self-interest it would be possible to suggest that the implementation of a dialogical approach, could possibly draw people into the experiences of co-creation and self-organization. Allowing them to become more engaged and focused on the common good of the organisation rather than their own self-interest. (Rami, et al., 2014) This could also be achieved by managers firstly making sense of the chaos of the multiple voices in the organisational landscape and producing a plan of action, this would help encourage a shared sense of features within the organisation. This in turn could lead to people within the organisation having a greater sense of self and others,

wanting the changes to work for the greater good of themselves and the organisation. (Wasserman, 2015) This would be down to the people who will ultimately embody and carry out the changes being engaged with the process, along with leaders and other stakeholders, in discussing what changes should occur. These members can self-identify, individually and in groups, the changes they want to take responsibility for. (Bushe, 2013) It has been argued that dialogical approach will capture the essence of people's perspectives including the belief that individuals want to be self-directed, work hard, and to assume responsibility. (Nguyen, 2000) It is also stated that the dialogical approach can create an alignment between self-interest and the collective interest of an organisations greater good than one that is forced or incentivised. (Lawson & Price, 2003) This being said the dialogical approach could increase positive behaviour due to organisational citizenship and a sense of belonging. (Battilana & Casciaro, 2013) The dialogical approach could provide significant benefits to organisations, allowing employees increased opportunities for co-leadership, autonomy, empowerment, self-management and participation. It also could lead to more interdependence of the organisation's essential parts, because there is no innate conflict between the individual self-interest and the organisation's collective goals. (Lively, 1978)

Although it is also possible to argue that if self-interest is too strong with an individual even with a fully dialogical approach that self-preservation and self-importance could impact the overall organisational change. (Van Dam, et al., 2008) When an employee is overly engrained in their own self-interest they can excessively be concerned with their own needs, desires or welfare.

By doing this, an individual ignores and pays no attention to the interests of their co-workers and is solely focused on achieving their own desires and fulfilment. This can make a worker completely narcissistic while chasing self-glory and crying for credit. Because these types of individuals regularly thirst for achievement, many narcissists are higher achievers. They get acknowledged, rewarded, praised, and promoted more often than others.

(Lavelle, 2010) The problem with a dialogical approach is every person has a different level of self-interest be this low, or high in the latter case if it is too strong it could lead to catastrophic results to an organisation if the dialogical approach is employed as this style of worker could be so entrenched in looking after themselves that they could deliberately sabotage an

organisations attempt to change for their own self-interest. (De Dreu & Nauta, 2009) Workers who have a high self-interest are more likely to keep themselves out of organisational citizenship behaviour. Workers who have a low self-interest on the other hand tend to be driven by relatively egoistic drives that drive them to give in order to receive praise and admiration.

(Ahmad, 2018) It is also possible to argue that the dialogical approach if not implemented correctly could lead to more resistance, if the organisation does not fully take on the workers views and pushes against the workers resistance with contingent reinforcement is an adjustment to symptoms rather than causes, and a counterproductive one at that. (Tams, 2018)

Moving onto psychological reasons again employing a dialogical approach may help reduce resistance to change. Once a worker understands the value of change and the desired future is better or easier for the worker, they would be more likely to accept the change. (Smith, 2003) When a dialogical

approach is implemented, communication needs to be clear and concise, as it is widely accepted that humans need to hear most points more than once before they truly understand. (Leonard, et al., 2004) So, the need for change needs to be reinforced several times. It is also imperative to listen to what the workers are saying and respond appropriately. In general, the workers need to know that the management are there with them throughout the change to help alleviate their fear of the unknown. (Stephenson & Blaza, 2001) By using the dialogical approach, it may be possible to find out the reason for the workers fear of the unknown, because they are not sure that they will be able to perform to their current standards because they are aware, they are missing an important skill to integrate with the change productively. (Bushe, 2013) With the dialogical approach this may be resolved if the management listen to the fact the worker feels like they are missing a particular skill and providing training and support to the worker. However, there is a chance that their psychological reasons for not embracing the change could arise from their individual anxiety to the change. (Jabri, 2015) The dialogical approach will allow the organisation to understand what is causing the fear and provide relevant training and support to help the workers follow the road to success with the development of the organisation. (Smith, 2003) It is also important for organisations to develop the correct reward schemes and decide how to reprimand workers. As discussed, organisational development can be unsettling and disruptive at the beginning, which can lead to increasing the workers fear of change. However, if the organisation implements a solid reward system that rewards the workers performance throughout the implementation of the change this will help alleviate the fear of the unknown. (Ajila & Abiola, 2004)

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On the other hand, the dialogical approach may not be able to solve all the psychological reasons that causes a resistance to change. This is due to over a period of time the brain creates links that organises reality into perceptual order that creates effective and established habits, so when an organisation is developing the brain limits what it can handle, and reality conforms to past perceptions. Early lessons in life and business play a part in keeping humans from seeing things in fresh ways. (Forbes, 2013) To help ease the brain into learning a new skill experimental learning is hugely important. The dialogical approach may help reduce some of the fear of the unknown, however without strong guidance through the initial change process to allow the brain the ability to create new mind maps it will always try to revert to the original way of doing things. (Blakemore & Frith, 2005) While the dialogical approach can help alleviate the fear of the unknown, because the workers have enough information to help reduce anxious feelings and decreases the need for the workers to take a leap of faith. (Nikolova, et al., 2015) Concern about success can also lead to resistance to change. It has been noticed that sometimes people are scared of succeeding as they fear that may lose friends or exploit others. (Kouzes & Posner, 2010) The problem with a dialogical approach when it comes to psychological reasons for resisting change is that some of these reasons may not become apparent till the change is taking place. While it is improbable to suggest that all psychological reasons can be prevented by using the dialogical approach.

There are many positive and negative outcomes of incorporating a dialogical approach to organisational development. However, the majority of these are down to how the management teams operate and incorporate a dialogical

approach to help manage the development of the organisation. This is because breakdowns in communication play a pivotal role in organisational development. Even the smallest of issues can cause serious problems in a changing organisation as discussions can be hindered by people holding onto and defending their personal different views. (Isaacs, 1999) How leaders take on this difference of views is imperative, as the clash of opinion will illuminate productive pathways for action and insight. But how the leadership team respond to this is important as in practice, discussions can often devolve into debate, where people view one another as positions to agree with or contest, not as a whole group learning exercise. (Weber, et al., 2008) For leaders to employ a truly dialogical approach to managing change they need to be balanced. These leaders need to be open to suggestion which may come in different quality from a selection of different sources. However, it is solely down to the individual leader's ability to enhance a strong quality of conversation with their workers and how they implement the views they discuss with their teams. Leaders have many different options when it comes to making the final decision, be this going in the way they think is best by expressing their true opinion and encouraging their workers to do the same. They can also take on their colleagues' advice and go in a different direction as it is possible, they have their own opinions from their own experiences that may greatly help the organisation to develop. (Isaacs, 1999) They can even develop their plans to incorporate views from all sides, but how the leadership team decide to go may play an important factor in the outcome of the change.

Failure to competently encourage and inspire workers through organisational development can lead to turmoil within the organisation. This can often lead to organisational politics as any mis management gives the workers the opportunity to gain advantages. This pursuit of organisational politics can only end once the organisation settles down after the change. There is however the possibility that organisational politics can get involved in organisational development. (Jones, 2013) If people with self-interest try to force change so they win, this can be for the good of the organisation or not. Although if workers who care for the organisation get into the world of organisational politics this can lead to them producing changes to the company for the greater good. (Bolman & Deal, 2017) While there is the possibility that workers will go with what the manager wants for their own self-interest. Organisational politics is the same as any politics there is always the chance that they will try to look after themselves and their close friends rather than the greater environment. (Salin, 2003) However organisational politics can encourage the workers to see and understand the organisation's goals and visions, at the same time can prepare the worker with skills to better them as an individual. Organisational politics can even educate the workers to be more aware of the level of caution, care and work ethic required to succeed in your organisation which has the knock-on effect of increasing efficiency. With this being said organisational politics can cause friction within the working environment that will cause fall out, the possibility that organisational politics will result in the failure of organisational development is likely but how the politics are used can also be for the greater good of the organisation. (Butcher & Clarke, 1999)

When organisations decide they need to develop there is always the possibility that it will fail with around 70% of organisational developments failing. (Doherty & King, 2001) However, it is important to note that if the dialogical approach is incorporated into the change process that it may or may not be successful but the main reasons for that is how well the leaders are at incorporating it into their development plan. (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1989) This is due to many factors that have been discussed, self-interest can be guided through an organisational change but as mentioned earlier there is always the possibility that the workers are only concerned with their own personal needs, desires or welfare, rather than that of the wider environment. (De Dreu & Nauta, 2009) Whereas with good leadership and guidance through the organisations change even those with the highest self-interest with the right support, can go into the change process hoping for success, this can be achieved if the managers explain the value it adds to the workers day to day life and what rewards they can expect to receive from embracing the change. The same goes for psychological reasons for resisting change, with the right support and guidance from the leaders of the organisation there is no reason for there to be a fear of the unknown as this would have been alleviated in the planning stages of the organisation's development as the main reason for this fear comes from the changes being implemented without adequate warning. Although there is still the possibility that if they are scared because they believe they do not have adequate skills to be fully equipped for the change. To answer the question is it possible to have a truly open and participative approach to organisational development, it all falls down to the way all the individuals in the organisation as a whole communicate their concerns and feelings, while at the same time a strong

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leadership team who take on the views of the individuals and ensuring they put adequate resources in place to support and reward the individuals on their path to organisational development. The dialogical approach could lead to a truly participative approach to organisational development, but with everything is down to the individual organisation and the leadership their teams get from their management teams.

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