

Resistance to organisational change essay



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Introduction

Perhaps it can be said that modern day organisation changes are the archenemy of complacency. Strategic transformation requires careful attention to detail and ongoing support. Long-term change however requires a commitment to make it happen. Many organisations have failed in the attempt to make change a successful event, however, there have been others that met the challenge of making it happen. Those organisations which have succeeded have done so with a step-by-step model intended to guide the intricacies of change processes. Leaders who understand the dynamics of humanism are better positioned to gain voluntary participation from their workforce. Engaging emotional support for the new vision of an organisation is but an art that is mastered over time. Behavior modeling and self-accountability are instrumental to transmitting desired results. Goals and objectives are intangible until the leadership team can guide the workforce through the difficulties that come from changing old habits. This paper discusses a merger between two organisations that conducted business as buyer and vendor. The buyer acquires the vendor and begins the process to change its culture using the eight steps at the heart of change.

This paper discusses the Hats-Galore Inc. acquisition of Gloves-n-More Inc., a company that historically was a major supplier to Hats-Galore. The change agent (CA) at Hats-Galore Inc. is responsible for changing the corporate policies of Gloves-n-More Inc. to match those of Hats-Galore Inc. The CA has determined that the policies of Gloves-n-More Inc. are very formal and rigid which matches the organisational culture often described as bureaucratic.

The Hats-Galore Inc. corporate culture is more relaxed and more like a family.

The CA has decided to address the corporate culture change using a Bottom-Up strategy (Cohen & Kotter, 2002). The “ See, Feel, Change” concept is used to summarize the eight stages of large scale organisational change (Cohen & Kotter, 2002). It is anticipated that the Gloves-n-More Inc. employees will resist the change. A brief discussion on addressing the resistance follows. The advantages and disadvantages of using the bottom-up strategy will be discussed. The paper closes with a recapitulation of its content.

See, Feel, Change Concept

Cohen and Kotter (2002) proposed the See, Feel, Change concept as a way to demonstrate for organisations the difficulty in changing employee behavior. Cohen and Kotter (2002) affirm that given the massive challenges on implementing corporate change, there are organisations succeeding at the practice. They assert further that management teams able to inspire change create a compelling vision that inspires action. Cohen and Kotter (2002) declare that those managers help employees visualize the problem (see), and “ feel” (emotional engagement) the need to voluntarily participate in the mission (change).

Zaleski, Gold, Rotella and Andriani (2002) conducted a review of Cohen and Kotter’s (2002) See, Feel, Change methodology and found that Cohen and Kotter (2002) provided convincing evidence that demonstrates the simplicity of the approach, and complexities of behavioral change. Saunderson (2011)

suggests that recognition is a tool to be used in establishing an emotional (feeling) connection with employees, influence their attitudes, and change their minds. Landry (2002) found that the emotional focal point suggests more art than it does a systematic process. Marshall (2002) suggests that of all emotions, feelings, are the most powerful and definitely a tool to be used in change initiatives.

Advantages of Bottom-Up Approach

Conway and Monks (2011) imply that the bottom-up approach engages employees in ways that encourage voluntary participation. Additionally, there is opportunity for midlevel managers to mediate and negotiate strategic connections in ways that create positive political interactions between the executives of both organisations. Employees assume ownership of responsibilities when they sense that the management team sincerely cares about them (Conway & Monks, 2011). Hill, Seo, Kang, and Taylor (2012) suggest that the interactive communication between high ranking managers and first level employees promote positive perceptions.

Disadvantages of Bottom-Up Approach

Conway and Monks (2011) identified the potential for fragmentation of networks and personal interactions that might interfere with work related processes. The bottom-up approach does not eliminate uncertainty, it merely reduces it. Additionally, the bottom-up process forces employees to unlearn traditional ways (Conway & Monks, 2011). The bottom-up strategy is not business process driven (IBM, nd).

Kezar (2012) conducted a study on bottom-up approaches and found that the focus remains on senior level leadership, such as, those found in the C-Suites (Chieftains). Kezar asserts further that the potential of efforts disintegrating remains high if the C-Suite support diminishes. Challenges remain in uniting the support of senior level executives with those of the front line supervisors. Kezar (2012) proposed that social theory applies to the collaboration processes of negotiation and leveraging activities, hence, creating differences in elitist and non-elitist perspectives.

Anticipated Resistance To Change

Conway and Monks (2011) suggest that resistance to change comes from inadequate communication with employees. They assert further that employees who perceive the imposition of change initiatives experience different levels of anxiety that lead to resistance. Conway and Monks (2011) observe that midlevel managers stall the change process by using procrastination as a resistance tool. Michela and Vena (2012) conducted a study on the psychological impact of mergers and acquisitions on employee emotional stability. They found that employees who feel threaten by the loss of their jobs to mergers and acquisitions tend to fall into a self-protective mode that interferes with the change initiatives.

Quinones-Gonzalez (2013) suggests that the employer-employee psychological contract is real and has the potential to affect the employer-employee relationship in positive or negative ways. Additionally says Quinones-Gonzalez (2013), employees are prone to perceive mergers and acquisitions as contract breaching. As a result, they may demonstrate adverse behaviors that interfere with the change process. Hinescu (2014)

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proposes that the duplication of departments result from mergers and acquisitions. As a result, there are two sets of employees who will potentially experience the symptoms of the stress and low morale that accompanies uncertainty.

Bottom-Up Approach Application

Kezar (2012) compares the bottom-up approach application as one based upon shared leadership and humanistic psychology. She discusses the interdependent variables which make the interactive process productive. Those variables were identified as empowerment, decision making responsibilities, and accountability. Kezar (2012) maintains that shared leadership facilitates the decision making process and contributes to the ongoing functions of the organisation.

The CA at Hats-Galore Inc. will use the bottom-up methodology to encourage autonomy. The CA will also empower employees with decision making responsibilities. Additionally, the CA will encourage open communication between the management team and first level employees. Managers will be encouraged to speak of the impending changes on a daily basis. Cohen and Kotter (2002) quote Jack Welch as saying, “ you’ve got to talk about change every second of the day, that’s a bit of an extreme position, but maybe extreme is what wins” (p. 14).

Eight Stages Of Large-Scale Change

Mento, Jones, and Dirndofer (2002) refer to the eight stages of change as one of three exemplary models. Kotter and Cohen (2002) promoted the stages as a model to be preferred over all others. The eight stage model has

been designed for strategic level changes. Theoretically validated, the model has simple applicability for the merger between Hats-Galore Inc. and Gloves-n-More Inc (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Though it is a simple and unambiguous model, its complexity unfolds during the various stages of engagement (Mento, Jones, & Dirndorfer, 2002). The model complements the bottom-up approach undertaken by the CA of Hats-Galore Inc.

Stage 1: Establishing Urgency

Schippmann and Newton (2008) suggest that introducing change to an organisation requires the CA to instill value and meaning to the process.

Establishing urgency provides ample opportunity for the CA to influence the masses with inspiration and motivation to move the process forward.

Creating urgency can be done by eliminating the threat of overwhelming the audience with a vague message. Goals and objectives can be simplified into actionable directives (Akerley, 2012; Cohen & Kotter, 2002; Schippmann & Newton, 2008).

Stage 2: Building Guide Teams

Change initiatives require the support, intensity, and excitement of a team.

Goals and objectives materialize when everyone is moving in the same direction. Jack and Welch (2011) assert that effective leaders get emotional with their star performers. They recommend tough love, meaning that this is not the time to promote incompetence. Building an effective team requires the CA to articulate where everyone stands (Jack & Welch, 2011; Cohen & Kotter, 2002).

Stage 3: Make the Vision a Reality

The vision articulates an attractive future of the organisation and the mutual benefits to be gained. It must be realistic and measures the effectiveness of a shared mission. It must be emotionally engaging. It must include values that resonate with the leaders, stakeholders, and employees (Cohen & Kotter, 2002; Create, 2011).

Cohen and Kotter (2002) posit that the vision drives the action aroused by urgency. The vision must be presented in living color. When employees can see a clear picture they develop an autonomous mode of working. As a result, they can work faster and with less input from their superiors (Cohen & Kotter, 2002; Mento, Jones, & Dirndorfer, 2002).

Stage 4: Influence Via Effective Communication

Harvey (2015) recommends that the CA take time to walk around and talk to people one-on-one because it opens up the channel of understanding with empathy in place. He says that communication is an art as well as a science because it can be practiced on a step-by-step basis and mastered efficiently. Harvey (2015) asserts further that effective communicators are passionate and speak with clarity. A CA must drive up the emotional energy in ways that employees can feel their commitment (Harvey, 2015; Cohen & Kotter, 2002).

Stage 5: Empower For Action

Ghosh (2013) posits that employee empowerment is about transferring power from managers to front level subordinates. It is a strategic tool when used effectively. Ghosh (2013) proposes that people are socialized towards accepting responsibility for significant assignments. Therefore, managers can facilitate the process of empowerment by ensuring that opportunities of

growth and personal development for their employees are abundantly available (Ghosh, 2013; Cohen & Kotter, 2002).

Stage 6: Celebrating Short-Term Wins

Cohen and Kotter (2002) encourage change agents to celebrate short-term victories. One organisation celebrated their employees and found the experience to be rewarding, both for managers and their employees (Celebrating, 2010). Paterson (2014) recommends that all celebrations no matter how small are diverse and inclusive of all employees. A few ways to celebrate short-term wins could include posting thank you notes on employee desks, filling their desks with balloons, and extending lunch breaks (101, nd).

Stage 7: Implement and Sustain

Cater and Puto (2010) conducted a study concerning the strategy implementation competence of managers. They found that managers were better skilled at devising strategies than they were at implementing them. Thereby, rendering the strategy impractical. As a result, managers feel bewildered when the intended goals and objectives fail (Cohen & Kotter, 2002).

According to Cohen and Kotter (2002), the implementation stage of change is about leverage, alignment, and sustenance. Leverage concerns using the momentum gained in the latter stages to strengthen weaker areas and reinforce the strategic advantages. Alignment ensures that the ongoing activities are connected to relevant objectives. Sustenance requires that the sense of urgency is maintained throughout the duration of implementation (Cater & Puto, 2010; Cohen & Kotter, 2002).

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Stage 8: Provide Ongoing Support

Cohen and Kotter (2002) assert that lack of ongoing support could derail the progress made. Hence, the eight stage promotes the increase of focus on the changes made. Managers must take time to show the before and after effects of the changes. Additionally, new leadership must be identified and developed to promote the cultural transformation (Cohen & Kotter, 2002).

Closing Comments

Self-efficacy and job satisfaction are instrumental to the success of any organisation. The ability for individuals to adapt to their social-cultural environments has an impact on their social-emotional well being.

Organisation leadership must continuously look to new ways of engaging their employees in the vision of the organisation. Additionally, they must include opportunities for self-realization, self-efficacy, and personal development into daily work-related-tasks (Cooper, 2013).

The eight stages of change presents modern day management with a tool that incorporates humanistic theory, meaningful values, and self-realization for their workforce into work processes. As a result, CA have a versatile model that will facilitate the change process and provide opportunities at every stage to increase the job-satisfaction and self-efficacy needs of the workforce. Success for the organisation and employee is dependent upon the identity link created by employee perceptions. During the eight stage process, managers have the ability to influence employee perceptions in ways that help them feel safe and satisfied with the organisation (Perdue, Reardon, & Peterson, 2007).

Conclusion

This paper discussed the eight stages of change as a strategic approach for the merger of Hats-Galore Inc. and Gloves-n-More Inc. The CA of Hats-Galore Inc. was tasked with the responsibility of transforming the bureaucratic culture of Gloves-n-More Inc to the friendly and family oriented culture of Hats-Galore Inc. The See, Feel, Change concept discussed the challenges and viability of transformative change. The paper has met its intended goal.

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