

How to implement a satisfactory organizational change ¹

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Organizational change is inherent to any organization in consideration of the nature of an open system. Change is inevitable; however, it is essential to lead that change in an evolutionary fashion rather than being forced to implement revolutionary and unplanned changes.

As the organizational change is systemic, once something starts to change, other aspects will be affected and must be considered into a plan for change. Process, knowledge, communication, and leadership are relevant aspects to successfully help organizations transition into a new situation. Project managers become critical components of organizational change due to the nature of management. Organizational change can be structured and controlled like any other project with methodology.

Consulting management firms are a relevant way to help organizations go through this process flawlessly. Consulting firms specializing in different management and strategical aspects and, therefore, under a methodological frame can lead organizations to adapt new status through a series of steps that will assure the desired new state. Consultants and their firms become a vital component to help the organization make the right decisions during the organizational change process; therefore, selecting the right consulting company becomes essential for your organization.

Organizational change challenge

Organizational change, as we know, can be driven either by inner or outer conditions, coming from the external environment, but also originated for the needs within organizations. The current context of globalization and the dynamic of change pushes organizations to keep up to speed in a competitive way so the entities can survive and adapt the changes into new ways of operating.

Organizational change is recognized in the theory and practice as a consistent practice in management to restructure many organizations and businesses. Even with many successful stories, approximately 70 percent of planned organizational change initiatives fail due to not overcoming several challenges.

Barriers and limits to innovation and organizational change have been widely discussed in the research literature. The challenges mentioned most frequently include communication barriers, employees' and managers' resistance to change, communication, and organizational culture. Lack of resources, in general, such as qualified staff, time, and financial reserves, can also contribute to failure.

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However, organizational changes are helpful and have also shown that the correct process and elements can help organizations overcome many difficulties and efficiently move to another phase. The changes in an organization can be proactive or reactive; when it is dynamic resources can be optimized, planned, and oriented to the new ideal state. On the other hand, responsive change is perceived as a response to changes in the environment or crisis.

Successful cases of study

It can be challenging to find and refer to the success case studies; however, it is possible to find either in the private or public sector or even in non-profit organizations cases where organizational change has been completed in good terms.

Public sector organizations are known for being bureaucratic and challenging to change most of the time. Many procedures and levels of approval change represent a considerable amount of energy. The public sector, in recent times, is facing incredible pressures to adjust to the new, evolving demands of their constituencies. These new demands will represent changes in the organization and its culture. For example, with the pandemic, the prompt response for attending seek people, open hospital with enough spaces and resources to treat them, and the answer for the vaccination are examples that public organizations need to change rapidly. The experience shows us that the necessary changes can occur with a certain amount of efficacy through specific and oriented training and leading by example. However, resistance and the "this is the way that has always done things" type of thoughts becomes difficult to initiate any organizational change project.

While an organization's culture is continually evolving, it is essential to notice that changing an organization's culture is a long-term endeavor. Somehow, the long-lasting nature of the cultural change process could result from the resistance that accompanies some planned changes to an organization's culture. Leaders must recognize that changing an organization's culture may evoke emotional reactions from employees. Training employees should help mitigate some of these reactions by laying a foundation to support organizational culture changes.

So, leaders had to apply open communication, let employees express their fears and participate in the initiative, being trained, express themselves, and lead by example.

As discussed, allowing employees to participate and become involved in making the changes in the organization and its culture can profoundly impact their willingness to buy into the changes. Leaders should remember that communication plays a dominant role in changing an organization.

Elements considered to overcome Organizational change challenges

Organizational change represents several challenges for any organization to succeed. Several factors must be assessed, and it is necessary to have a specific plan to incorporate and integrate the entire organization to overcome the challenges. In the

following section, we are referring to several aspects, according to our experience, that has played a crucial role in success. Sometimes it will require the entire organization; sometimes, it will be a matter of a few sectors or groups but incorporating or taking into account these elements will be a different outcome.

Resistance to change

Resistance to change is a natural human response to any changes and one of the barriers to achieving a successful organizational change. The organization should be prepared mentally and open to embracing organizational change. It is relevant that the negative attitudes toward change become solved to obtain a positive and productive result. All necessary information, workshops, and training to prepare the employees will play a crucial role in bringing down this barrier. Therefore, as Santhindra et al. mentioned, "change readiness positively affects commitment to change."

Employees can resist change for various reasons, either because they do not find the need or the value for transformation. They may not believe in the feasibility of the reform initiated, may have questions related to the leaders' capabilities, or may not want to get out of their comfort zone or because they are afraid. The reasons for resistance can be both personal and organizational. Whatever the reason is, if employees are not understanding or cooperating for change, the change may fail.

Leaders need to implement strategies to overcome the resistance they face as they lead to change. One of the most critical approaches involves involving employees during the change process, making them feel part of the process, owning the change, and champion. As we will discuss in the next point, continuous and timely communication can be the difference to help resistance to change overcome.

Communication

Communication is a critical element that scholars and practitioners have studied for so long, and the relationship between communication and organizational change. Repeatedly, scholars have stated that communication and change is a subject field that is very important to develop.

Communication inside organizations can be used in three different roles to support organizational change: 1) communication as a tool, inform, create understanding, and change people's attitudes and behavior. 2) communication as a socially constructed process, helping the organization changed being regarded as an occasion when new social realities are produced through communication. 3) communication as social transformation, where leaders' stories are used strategically to accomplish discursive closure or conflict suppression. In this way, communication helps the leader model the way and help the organizational change succeed.

Whatever the use of communication, the organization decides to use it. Communication becomes a crucial element for all processes that will occur inside the organization.

Communication has to flow from up to down and vice versa to minimize risks for lack of correct messages or clarification on time.

Organizational culture

Organizational culture tends to be unique for every singular organization, composed of objective and subjective aspects, and concerned with tradition and the nature of shared beliefs and expectations about organizational life. It is a determinant of individual and group behavior. Corporate culture affects practically all aspects of organizational growth. From how people interact with each other, the types of decisions the firm made, how they perform their work, how they dress its corporate policies and procedures, and strategic considerations, as Buono et al. mentioned.

In recognizing that organizational culture is an essential factor in organizational effectiveness and change, corporate culture must be included in the aspects that will influence the correct development of the desired change. It becomes a critical and essential task for managers involved to understand, monitor, and actively manage the culture of their organization. Understanding an organization's culture can also provide insight into the history of the organization and critical events that may have helped shape the identity of the organization.

To succeed in organizational change, sometimes it is necessary to adjust to the current corporate culture, including creating new stories to tell, new approaches, and open leadership willing to collaborate with others.

Resources

Resources are limited everywhere when a new project, initiative, or endeavor like organizational change occurs inside an organization might represent a problem to keep performance while using the same resources to operate.

The availability of resources becomes critical to the success of change implementation while keeping the pace of the operations at the same time.

Despite other challenges discussed in this paper, the fact of having the right resources allocated at the right time and the right tasks become a titanic task. It must be evaluated and implemented the right strategy in change through emphasizing resource-consuming strategic actions and differences through highlighting resource-freeing strategic efforts.

Training

The successful principle of change is training and development. Individuals that receive developmental training will recognize a need for change as the organization grows. The investment in human capital supports effective future change, strengthens organizational leadership, and develops from within. Trained leaders far outperform those who have not received developmental training.

So, training becomes a critical factor for the desired outcome. Training will help the resistance to change and the adoption of new practices and processes. Training will help all employees involved, and managers and executives operate under the new state with the best possible tools and mechanisms.

Leadership

Leadership is an essential component for organizational change to occur. Even when several leadership styles, some of them, like transformational leadership, could be a good fit. Transformational leadership and employee commitment are connected to a correct organizational change. More transformational leaders can get buy-in from employees than other leadership styles when dealing with change.

Leaders that practice engagement and input from their employees often achieve higher rates of long-term organizational success. Fundamentally, leaders remain present in the entire process. Leaders with the competency that is trusted, respected, responsible, fair, and caring will help them successfully go through the process.

Consulting Firms

Consulting firms in management are becoming relevant nowadays due to their expertise in establishing mechanisms and methodologies that help organizations change. There are many specialized consulting firms worldwide; some of them have been notorious and even transcend frontiers. However, for an organization to decide which consulting firm to choose, at least the professional practice must contain the following requirements:

- **Respectability.** The consulting firm you are looking for to help your organization succeed in any initiative or change has to be respectable from previous works, have references, and have general recognition in the market.
- **Exposure.** The firm has to have a presence in the market. In the technological era, presence in social media, exposure participating in conferences, congress, professional events, speeches, lectures, videos, and so on show its knowledge and expertise.
- **Reputation.** The consultant or the firm should have an excellent reputation in their area of knowledge or expertise. This point comes along with the other two. So, it is recommendable the review and validation of the background and experience of the partner that will help us with our process to be sure that the recommendations and, overall, the outcome will be what is expected.

The consulting company selected with references will have the three mentioned elements: respect, exposure, and reputation built on previous clients' experience and projects.

The consulting firm should also have a methodology and a frame that supports the process for the organization to implement the change inside it.

Selecting the right consulting firm becomes crucial for our goal. This will become the partner that will help us obtain most of the organizational change projects. It will be the people in charge of giving orientation, support, consultation, and guidance to approach every step of the way correctly.

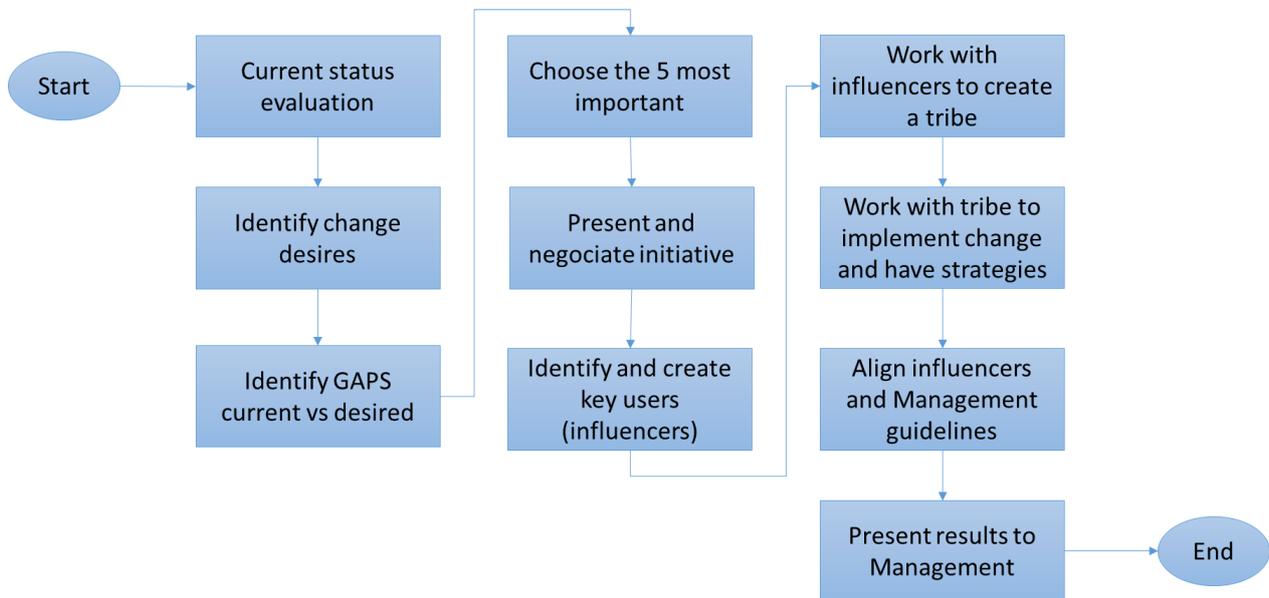


Fig. 1. 10 Steps process of change management

Conclusion

Organizational change can be stressful for all teams involved, representing a difficult period to pass; however, good things can be obtained from this process. The change will mean a new way of doing things, new procedures, and so on, but the organization's culture will also be affected. As a result of the change in a new vision, mission, values might be affected and result in new ones.

Employees actively participating in the initiative will help promote change in other areas when needed and prepare for future changes if needed. Organizational change could be small or big. One could be that for the first instance, only certain areas will change, and only specific procedures will be modified while the majority remained untouched. That does not mean that the changes are all done. It will be needed to revisit pending modifications to accomplish the best for the organization. The resulted organization's culture will impact in practical ways their outputs.

The participation of several elements in an organizational change will represent a risk and opportunity simultaneously. Due to its multifactorial and multidimensional nature, organizational change must be implemented from a systemic point of view. Risks of not considering some aspects that, in turn, could become the source of a new change have to be measured and observed with anticipation.

A consulting firm will help us and guide us to run an organizational change project smoothly. Identifying and controlling all possible obstacles in advance and giving the recommendations and plan of actions in advance so that following the methodology, the organizational change can be achieved and is permanent with the best possible results. Either if your change is small or big, either if it is planned or unplanned, or even if it represents considerable work. It is best to be open enough to let others conduct us in the right way and have expert people to accompany the change.

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