

Change Management Approach

Traditional Change Management Approach & Participative Change Management Approach

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TRADITIONAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT APPROACH

For a number of decades the dominant paradigm has been the traditional change management approach. It is best represented by the viewpoint that leaders and managers are solely responsible for making the key decisions within an organisation and are also accountable for ensuring successful change management processes. The focus in the literature is about

managing the transition and specifically overcoming resistance to change (Hay and Hartel, 2000; Maurer 1996; Tichy, 1983; Quinn, 1978; March and Simon, 1958). Senior managers 'worry a lot' about change but too few of these concerns are focused on building rapport with the affected staff. Much of the focus instead is with providing legitimate justification for the need for the change. They avoid dealing with the tougher issues of staff perception of hidden agendas and unsurfaced rationale(s) rooted in self-interest and the exercise of managerial power.

Resistance to change (once seen as inevitable) when manifested can be resolved through a number of mechanisms. Argyris and Kaplan's (1994) study of the implementation of activity based costing identified three processes to overcome barriers to change that exist at the individual, group, inter-group and organisational levels. These included education and training to explain the need for change and reduce fear of the unknown; sponsorship of the process by key individuals who then persuade others; and, alignment of incentives such that systems and structures reward and reinforce effective change.

PARTICIPATIVE CHANGE MANAGEMENT APPROACH

There is a need to alter the approach and shift the focus within the extant literature with its prescriptive edge that attempts to deliver more successful change management and implementation with the concomitant emphasis on identifying and overcoming employee resistance (Waldersee and Griffiths, 1997; Clarke, 1994; Kanter, Stein and Jick, 1992;

EFFECTIVE WAY OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT	Carnall, 1990). The alternative is to involve employees from the beginning by permitting and encouraging active involvement, full participation in and psychological ownership of the change process.
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This would act as an effective counterfoil to the shortcomings of management '...failing to communicate a vision, planning problems, not matching vision with processes, not being committed to the change process, failing to lead by example, demonstrating inconsistencies of attitudes to change' (Walderssee and Griffiths, 1997, p. 10).

The first step is to rethink the existing negative notion of resistance. Waddell and Sohal (1998, p. 5) argue that one should consider the utility of resistance in '...injecting energy into the change process' and that it '...encourages the search for alternative methods and outcomes in order to synthesise the conflicting opinions that may exist.' This means that resistance can be a positive force and a critical source of innovation during a change process to ensure that many more possibilities are examined and evaluated closely.⁴ What we advocate then is to recast the notion of resistance so that it is viewed instead as the active encouragement of constructive conflict. This avoids what can happen if overt resistance is itself merely resisted and battered down (usually by information overload) by senior managers. This resistance can become more intense and covert, effectively derailing the change process.

The next step is to utilise an action framework that has a collective and collaborative approach to decision-making and the change process. The management role becomes one of facilitation not the usual top-down dictatorial change management decision-making process. The intellectual underpinning for this move comes from action learning and action research methodologies, which are oriented to both change

and learning/research within organisations. They are participative and egalitarian and have a problem/solution orientation that is recursive (cyclic in nature). As a result they are empowering, engender greater ownership of the outcome(s) and are also reflexive, flexible and responsive to the organisational context and constraints (Sankaran et al., 2001).

Under this approach the affected employees form groups that are empowered to consider, debate alternatives, construct outcome(s) and actively engage in and manage the change process from both a bottom up and a top down perspective. Senior managers and employees are equal and active participants in the change process. The result is a more effective organisational change with enhanced employee engagement in, and ownership of, the outcome(s) and minimising, if not eliminating, resistance.