
STRATEGIES AND TACTICS REGARDING CHANGE COMMUNICATION WITHIN ORGANISATIONS. REAL EXAMPLE REGARDING COMMUNICATION CHANGE IN AN ORGANISATION¹

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Abstract:

Organizations are, on one hand, a social reality, and, on the other hand human relations centres. Organizational processes, such as, for example communication, decision taking and conflict management rely on how the people involved build meanings starting from their interactions and relying less on skill application techniques. Attempts to identify or develop a suitable formula and to be efficient for the successful changes often mislead, hence can not result but one thing which is the lack of an effective and efficient communication to be carried out within the organization. The present paper outlines the basic strategies of the entire change communication process within the organization, strategies which are the pattern that can be employed regardless of their field of activity and implicitly regardless of the changes that occur.

The paper has two parts: the first part is a theoretical periplus as far as change communication within the organization is concerned, change classification, change components, the exemplification of the six vectors of change determined by Shell company's group of researchers. The second part of the paper includes the practical side of the above mentioned. More exactly, based on a concrete example we shall show how managers are doing in case of change communication within the organization where they carry out their activity.

Keywords: *communication change, performance management, behavior change, organizational, change management, results of communication change, communication difficulties*

In any organization, whether it is about the replacement of one person from its job, the renewal of an equipment, the release of a new product, the opening of a new headquarter in another town or country, the change of the organizational structure which no longer meets the organization's goals or the direct investments or the

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majority package, in all these cases we are definitely talking about the procedure called change.

Change as a continuous process

Change is a specific and continuous process which can be planned or unplanned and which can determine another change or a chain of changes, which, in their turn, can generate momentary disturbances or even radical turns of situation.

In this change process, people hold an important place, because they are directly and indirectly affected by change and as a consequence they react differently since change causes emotional reactions and always has consequences that can be accepted, rejected or even ignored.

Perceived as an opportunity, change is characterized by dynamism, flexibility, activity, motivation, stimulation, threat (having as precedent the stress, money and time consumption, irritation, uncertainty, failure).

Change can be defined as the result of the action which modifies, varies, moves, changes, penalizes or makes a difference in one thing's state or replaces one state with another.

Changes within the organization. The classification of change situations:

1. *Changes in „hard” situations:* these are well-defined situations, with a single solution and they represent the technical and material changes. They are quantifiable and they have one solution. For example, we can mention the opening of a chain of shops, the analysis and research of a product or project in its prototype stage, the modernization of equipment [1].

2. *Changes in “soft” situations:* these are unquantifiable, emotional, they have various solutions and they interfere with the human emotional structure. For example: the reorganization of the supply system, the employment of a new general manager (CEO), the launching of a new product on the market [2].

According to the clarity of the change issue we determine:

1. *Delimited:* designated and restricted changes: are the ones that can solve obvious problems. They are called like this because solutions are known since the design stage of change. The characteristics of delimited changes are limited in time, the solution is known, the problem is known, what needs to be known is known, it can be approached differently, it has limited implications.

2. *Undefined changes:* the ones that solve the unclear issues, and they are called like this because there are not well-defined solutions in the change process. Complex troubles and issues raise undefined changes, what needs to be known is not exactly known, researched, analyzed and solutions are not known, many people are involved.

Among the factors which lead to organizational changes, we mention [3]: technology development, knowledge explosion, products' life cycle decrease, working conditions, changes regarding the labour force. Moreover, the causes of change in an organization are: the adjustment to the environment's complexity, the improvement of

some situations, processes, systems, activities, the organization's or activities' development, the obtaining and maintenance of the competitive advantage.

Changes within organizations are divided into:

1. *Changes in the external environment.* are usually outside the organization's management control and thus they have to be permanently scanned, analysed, evaluated, understood, anticipated in order for the management to take the decisions that would make the organization properly face these problems. Changes within organizations might appear at the national, international and local environments.

2. *Changes in the internal environment.* controlled by the organization's management. They might appear either to create the competitive advantage or to improve certain aspects from the current activity, or for the future development of the organization. These changes may vary according to the purpose and complexity, therefore, some of them might be minor or insignificant, others have a major effect on the organization. Among the changes generated by the internal environment, there can be exemplified: the introduction of a new personnel evaluation system, the implementation of a new software, the introduction of digital advertising, the employment of new top managers, downsizing, the restructuring of departments and the introduction of new organizational structures, the change of organizational culture as a result of internationalizing or of employer's change.

Pettigrew and Wipp (1993) have identified five factors that would lead to the success of change: coherence, environmental evaluation, leadership, human resources as assets and liabilities and the correlation of strategic change to the operational one.

The management of organizational change under international context is the managerial process of taking the decisions to create and increase the competitive advantage within a complex environment, volatile and risky, where people from countries other than the native one are involved [4]. A management of change shall be accompanied by a change of priorities [5].

Marris suggests three principles of the management of change [6]:

1. The reform process has to foresee and even encourage conflict, because people feel the need to react, to show their ambivalent feelings;
2. The change process has to respect the autonomy of different experiences, so that each group can organize itself without getting other foreign concepts' involvement;
3. In the reform process time and patience is required, because conflict does not only involve the accommodation of some different interests, but also the ability to make an essential continuity in the structure of stress. In practice, these principles are, according to Marris, rarely recognized.

Forces for and against change acts to maintain balance within the organization. If the forces for change are weak or defeated by the forces against change the current state is maintained and if, instead, forces defeat the forces that oppose change, change occurs. Identifying and evaluating the forces that resist change management organization to help choose the best strategy for action to reduce

or eliminate resistance to change (*Figure 1* [7]). Elements and forces positioned in the diagram shows the intensity of their action is read by thick arrows.

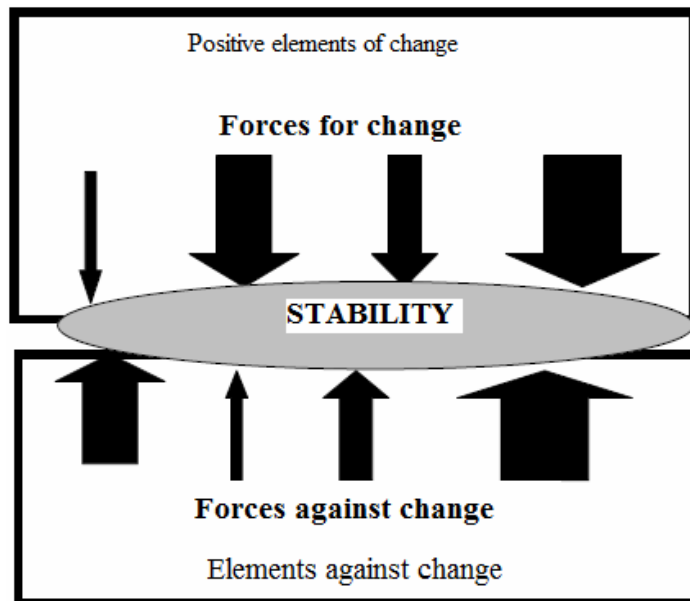


Figure 1. Force field analysis (after Lewin)

As a paradox of the organizational life, the situations and problems that require the most urgent change are often the ones that show the most inflexible resistance to change. Pugh also defines the three coordinates of the resistance to change [8]:

1. Logically, relevant or irrelevant objections turn out, because no one is able to think of all the implications of a change when it is designed;
2. Psychologically, people regard change as threats and dangers and believe they can convince by working better or more what they know;
3. Organizationally, because organizations are coalitions between various tensioned groups of interests and which are in a special balance of some forces polished over time.

For the organization to be first understood, Pugh mentions four principles for understanding the organizational change: the organization is a rational organism and not a mechanism; the organization is an occupational system and a political system; all members of the organization operate simultaneously in all three systems – rational, occupational, political; change stands better chances at people with good results.

Going further in exploring the change process, Pugh suggests six other rules, this time for the management, with the purpose of facilitating change:

1. The necessity of change should be established;
2. Change should include everything that needs to be changed;
3. Change should be initiated through informal communication and feed-back to ensure peoples' participation;

4. The ones that are affected by change should be encouraged to express their complaints
5. The change manager should be ready to change himself;
6. Change should be monitored and consolidated, by informing everyone.

Kanter identified ten reasons why people resist change and ways defeat the resistance to change that managers are at hand. These reasons are presented in *Table 1* [9].

	Reasons	Managers actions
1.	Fear of losing control	Involving people in decision making
2.	Excessive personal insecurity	Providing information to explain
3.	Desire to avoid surprises	Information and communication meetings
4.	Effect of difference	Maintaining symbols and change those things absolutely necessary
5.	Fear of loss of prestige	Recognition of human competence
6.	Concern about competence	Training, professional education
7.	Effect of shock wave	Planning, taking into account the impossible
8.	Fear of more work	Additional efforts will be rewarded
9.	Past resentments	Discovering and removing their resentment
10.	Real threats	Offering alternatives

Table 1. *Reasons why people resist change*

In the famous book *The new corporate strategy* (1988), which is one of the most important and influential books ever written on corporate strategies, H. Igor Ansoff and Edward J. McDonnell emphasized the fact that change within organizations is not unique at its level, being regarded by the two researchers rather as a portfolio of changes. The two scientists grouped changes into incremental and continuous. Incremental changes [10] refer to logical and relative changes within organizations, being a continuation of history. On the other hand, interrupted changes do not take into account the history of the organization's logical development and it is a starting step towards a new dimension. Regardless of their kind, changes are determined by the organizations' resources, the characteristics of the environment, the magnitude of the necessary strategy. The change process itself is complex and difficult to be accomplishment because managers must also deal with the current management problems, the strategic ones, but also with the change situations.

The elements of change:

1. *The opportunity of change*: it represents the main element of change and it results from the indifference between the current activity and strategy;

2. *The power of the change's forces*: the forces of change are internal and external, most of them coming from the outside. The power of these forces on the organization deeply influences the decision for change.

3. *The management of change*: in order to be accomplished, change needs the management, but its initiator is not always the manager and its manager does not necessarily correspond to the organization's management. The success of change depends on the involvement of the organization's management into the change management.

Change vectors

The group of scientists from Shell Company has identified 6 change vectors [11]:

1. *The cultural values of the organization*: an organization's system of values depends on its members' strategic mission. If the strategic mission is not well-understood and accepted by all members of the organization, then any change will attract opponents which do not share the same cultural values.

2. *Property over change*: it refers to an untouchable value, to initiative, to control, with the sense of "intellectual property";

3. *The clients/beneficiaries of change/stakeholders*: the ones that would benefit from the proposed change;

4. *The actors of change*: individual or legal persons involved in the change process, but also the ones upon which change has an implication;

5. *The modification of change as a process itself*: it represents the modification process itself, the modification of a current situation into a future one;

6. *The environment of change*: the context where change takes place is the environment of change. The evaluation of the environment, of the factors that influence change within the organization is necessary and compulsory for managers.

The groups within the organization

The need to belong to a group is a natural human need. A group is formed of individuals who have a common interest, who interact between them and know each other. Groups within the organization are formal (according to the organizational structure) and informal (which are led or dominated by people with less formal authority within the organizational structure). These groups can form a significant force against change. Knowing the roles fulfilled by the members of a group is essential for eliminating resistance to change. The group is formed, according to Tuckman [12] by covering four stages: training, outbreak, standardization and functioning. At the level of the group or the department, communication and consultation before the change is essential, especially during the planning stage.

Individual level within the organization

Communication and consulting are essential in personally convincing the one who sees in change an undermining of his position within the organization, of his own

values and interests. Sometimes, the individual's resistance to change is very well documented and grounded, so that it might lead to reconsidering or reexamining the nature of change. The members of the organization have a different behavior as far as change is concerned, some cooperate, others put up resistance. The individual resistance to change depends on the mental ability and intelligence of each, on self and collective motivation, on knowledge and experience, on personal interest, generally, on the way of thinking.

Action strategies against the resistance to change

Changes within organizations are perceived differently by its members depending on the level of understanding and control that people feel they have because they are involved. The basic answers, perceptions and attitudes of the members of the organization towards change are: the optimistic attitude (change is good, enthusiasm, opportunities, challenges, stimulation), pessimistic attitude (change is bad, fear of unknown, chaos, hostility, irritation, uncertainty), indifferent attitude (skepticism, uncertainty, confusion, stress, creative tension). However, the management has to take into account the position of the organization's members towards change.

Real communication example of change within an organization

Periodically, any company goes through certain changes; these can be changes of bosses or employees, technological changes, headquarter changes. Most of the times, managers do not know the best methods to communicate change.

The following example is taken from the journalistic field, more exactly, we shall exemplify a newspaper which has faced a technological change period. We relate to the moment when the institution will offer each journalist, but especially the reporters, the possibility to facilitate their work on the field by equipping them with recorders. Thus, they shall no longer have to use the pen and paper or the stenographic writing to write down all details on the respective piece of news within a "record" time. The newspaper is going through a confusing moment. This technological change is vital; most of the newspapers that want to remain competitive go through it. The newspaper's employees have ages between 21-50 years. Among those with ages between 21-25 there are also students, which are during the practical stage.

This is how the manager who communicates the change usually acts: after he discusses with the administrative department concerning the supply with recorders, he thinks he'll make his employees a pleasant surprise. He waits for the right time, namely the return of all journalists from the field so that, later on, he can call them in for a meeting.

The first messages formulated by the manager:

1. Starting today, something will change in the editorial office.
2. We have changed the laborious writing on the field with recorders.
3. I consider it a necessary change, a technological change that will increase working speed.

4. Forget about the often incomplete notes and take a look at these incredible recorders...
5. We begin a new era, nothing will be the same.

The employees' reaction:

The journalists are speechless; unfortunately, however, their faces do not show the joy the manager was hoping for. They just get the news and that's all. Although change is necessary, the employees tell the manager they got the idea and take over their "equipments". At first, they start testing them and they are a little shy.

After a while, some of the employees resign. It seems like journalism is no longer what they knew. The ones left kind of changed their behavior as well. For some of them, the quality of the written materials became somehow lower. Therefore, there is a discussion with the manager, who asks them to explain the situation. Obviously, they cannot give any explanation, the only plausible one being the fact that they are no longer as inspired as they used to be since they have stopped taking notes. After a while, the newspaper sets back on track, with half of the team new, and the quality of the materials apparently was not mediocre. The inevitable question comes now: what was wrong? Most definitely the change was necessary. It is probably very clear for each of us that the change was necessary. What was wrong? How could it have been made for people not to quit and for the change to have a positive impact?

From this we can conclude that the way change is communicated is more important than the change itself, regardless of its size or importance. Over time, after various researches on this issue, it has been reached the conclusion that, initially changes, regardless of their nature, are not accepted and each of us expresses a certain resistance to change. Most of the times change causes discomfort.

Although some of us like changes and permanently search them, they change the rhythm of the life we had been used to.

In order to efficiently communicate a change, the message of the change should first of all be correctly reformulated. It is common knowledge that in the communication process, language is the first thing we should turn to; undoubtedly, language in this case should be moderate. It is supposed to be easy to be used and at the same time the most efficient. Normally, people accept change if they are being explained that this change is a continuation of what we are doing until the moment of the change. Efficient would be to find as many relations as possible between what it is now and what will be so that change can be perceived as a continuation of what used to be. Expressions such as "the new technological era" are not messages that convince, on the contrary, it looks like these are messages that claim that change will bring nothing but misfortunes. As a conclusion, when change is communicated, the things that stay the same should be first outlined, and the things that change have to be explained as a continuation of what used to be. The more the things which remain are emphasized, the better the chance for people to perceive change as a positive thing increases. Moreover, the five messages formulated by the manager have to be

reformulated and thus the changes will be perceived as improvements. Then, the way of using the new equipment needs to be explained.

The way change is communicated is decisive for the future of the organization.

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