

Leadership and Change Management

By: J. Douglas Hood, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Business
Mount Olive College
jhood@moc.edu

Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to examine the reasons and circumstances of strategic change initiatives and how management and their behavior can go wrong. In particular, how such change initiatives are being communicated, perceived, justified, and implemented within organizations. Organizational change management is usually understood on the basis of traditional strategy approaches and tends to focus on technical issues. Of course, most managers work feverously to identify and pursue change management. Executives that fail to plan for the human side of change will often find themselves speculating why the plan has failed. No single methodology fits every organization or situation. What this presentation will explore is why change is inherently unsettling for people at all levels of the organization and why the leaders of the organization must embrace new approaches first and develop ways to motivate the rest of the institution. They must learn to speak with one voice and model the desired behaviors. The executive teams must understand that, although the public face may be unified, it is also composed of individuals who are going through stressful events and need to be supported.

Introduction

The importance of this study is found in the fact that most senior executives are faced with an unfamiliar challenge in major transformations of large enterprises. They and their advisors conventionally focus their attention on devising the best strategic and tactical plan. But, to succeed they also must have an intimate understanding of the human side of change management. The change must align with the organization's culture, values, people and behaviors to encourage the desired results. Action plans themselves do not and cannot capture value because value is realized through the sustained actions and behaviors of thousands of employees who are responsible for designing, living and executing with the changed environment. To evaluate long-term structural transformation we have to consider the four characteristics of magnitude, scale, duration and strategic importance. However, it must be understood the transformational companies will reap the rewards only when the change occurs at the most basic level of

the individual. In a transformational environment the company is dynamic, flexible, stimulating, encouraging, enlightening and visionary (Hallinger, 2003; Stewart, 2006). Most executives know this and worry about it. They also worry about retaining a company's unique values and their sense of identity and about creating a culture of employee's commitment and performance.

Organizations are highly specialized systems and there are many different methods to classify them. Some are in the wholesale business, others are in manufacturing, and still others confine their activities to distribution. Some belong to the health care industry, as providers, as insured or as insurers. Many are regulated, some are not. There are corporations, partnerships, and sole proprietorships. Some have been built up over many years while others such as Google are relatively new. No matter what size or business operated, it seems no two are the same in which change presents organizations with continually evolving processes whether the organization is transactional or transformational. This requires producing leaders that are effective.

Training and producing effective leaders cannot be limited to instilling effective traits in people. We must develop organizations that support the collective form of leadership where individuals feel safe, supported and free to think and act creatively. Huber and West (2002) asserted, "The organizational leader is most often cited as the key figure in the individual organizational development, either blocking or promoting changes, acting as the internal change agent, overseeing the processes of growth and renewal" (p. 1072). The challenge for leaders is to move from a bureaucratic system of managing people to a professional system marked by shared problem solving and decision making that becomes transforming.

Burns' latest book, *Transforming Leadership: A New Pursuit of Happiness* (2003) builds upon his earlier book, *Leadership*. Burns (2003) suggests that transactional leaders can themselves learn to become transformational. Burns (2003) further stated that leadership encompasses a moral foundation and a response to human desires as they are displayed in human values of major social change.

Burns (2003) examined outstanding world leaders in an effort to identify the causally efficacious factors that makes these people so extraordinary. Burns suggests that transforming leaders “define public values that embrace the supreme and enduring principles of a people” (p. 29). Transformation means changing the organization.

Almost always there is some resistance to organizational change. Most are afraid of being placed in the unknown. Many people like status quo and don't understand the need for change. Employees may ask the question, “How will this change affect me”? Some employees are extremely and vehemently critical and cynical about change, particularly if they subscribe to the notion of "change" as if it is a mantra. Many doubt there are effective and efficient means to accomplish major organizational change. Most often there are conflicting goals and procedures within the organization, e.g., to increase resources to accomplish the change yet concurrently cut costs to remain viable. Change often goes against the very values cherished by members in the organization. This may be the reason why much of organizational-change literature discussion elaborates on the culture of the organization [including successful change must involve top management, including the board and chief executive]. Usually there is a change champion who initially instigates the change. A change agent's role is usually responsible to translate the vision to a realistic plan and then carry out the plan. Change is usually best carried out as a team-wide effort. Communications about the change should be frequently articulated with all organization members. To maintain change, the structures of the organization itself should be altered, including top level strategic plans, policies and procedures. This change in the structures of the organization typically involves an unfreezing, change and re-freezing process. Successful change must involve top management, including the board and chief executive. The best approaches to address resistances are through increased and sustained communications and education. For example, the leader should meet with all managers and staff to explain reasons for the change, how it generally will be carried out and where others can go for additional information. A plan should be developed and communicated. Plans do change and change should be communicating

that it has and why. Forums should be held for organization members to express their ideas for the plan. They should be able to express their concerns and frustrations as well.

Intensifying competition for resources and demand for profit maximization is pressing firms to become more flexible, more results-focused, and more fast-acting. Organizations are finding that such competition requires competent leadership and the challenge for organizations and business schools alike is to help build effective leadership both in the next generation of managers and throughout organizations. Change management involves a sense of critical reflection.

According to Brookfield (1995), there are three major cultural barriers to critical reflection that inhibits change management: the culture of secrecy, the culture of individualism, and the culture of silence. The culture of secrecy is one born of insecurity, fear, and unawareness (Brookfield, 1995). The leadership of organizations tends to encourage a certain level of secrecy; for example, managers may fail to take their employees into certain areas of change because of feelings of fear and insecurity that they may not be able to expertly describe what is happening in that particular arena (Dimmock, 1995). Brookfield (1995) believes the second cultural barrier is “individualism.” Although individualism may have its place in the corporate world where it fits, but it can sometimes lead to personality clashes, undeserved promotions, and inefficiency. Moreover, the “transformational leadership” style places a premium on teamwork (Bass, 1997). The third barrier is silence. Brookfield believes individuals are reluctant to voice their opinion, and as a result, they remain silent (Brookfield, 1995). Individuals may see inequity and instability within the organization and feel the necessary response should be silence. Employees have sometimes noticed, for example, that they have erred in what he or she said, but fail to say anything because they fear the manager may respond negatively. Sometimes employees have alternative explanations for events. Employees may fail to acknowledge them for fear they may clash with the manager, and the manager will hold it against him or her during evaluations (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1994).

In studying these three cultural barriers, it becomes apparent that any organization is best served by removing or minimizing these barriers. Halpern and Hakel (2003) argue that because the intuitive knowledge of good management practice is rarely put to a systematic test, what people often “know” to be sound management practices may not be so at all. In many organizations, there is a culture that seems to understand basic organizational achievement but fails to realize the importance of managing the methods in which success is gained. Therefore, leadership is essential to proper decision making.

Purpose

Boulgarides (1973) conducted research in which he compared decision styles with leadership flexibility. He found that extremes of being too flexible or indecisive, or too rigid and authoritarian are the least effective. Fiedler (1967) suggests that it is easier to change almost anything than a manager’s or professional’s personality and style. However, even in a given phase of the organization’s life cycle, a flexible style that can be used to match a given situation was more effective than a nonflexible style. Leaders, who motivate and facilitate work accomplishment, are accepted and more easily followed. Perhaps the single most important technique for motivating the people is to treat them the same way you wish to be treated: as responsible professionals. Employers must strike the right balance of respect, dignity, fairness, incentive, and guidance, and this will create a motivated, productive, satisfying, and secure work environment.

When viewed in terms of leadership styles, the flexible leader adapts to new situations, whereas the rigid leader maintains consistent patterns of behavior in almost all situations. A flexible style does not mean changing personality. It does, however, involve the use of different tactics, depending on the situation. Flexibility is one of the core tenets of the “transformational leadership” style (Cohen, 1998).

Leadership Decision Styles

Stewart (2006) noted from his exhaustive review of studies on leadership that although such studies were abundant in terms of the sheer number of empirical studies, a central concept of leadership styles has yet to be developed. To illustrate the importance of

leadership style the following is a decision style model envisioned by Rowe and Boulgarides (1998) that encompasses four basic styles of leadership:

- *Directive:* This style has a low tolerance for ambiguity and low cognitive complexity. The focus is on technical decisions, and this style is generally autocratic. The decision maker may adopt this style due to a high need for power because of the use of little information and few alternatives, rapid and satisfactory solutions are typical. The decision makers tend to be focused and are frequently aggressive. Generally, they prefer structure and specific information, which is given verbally. Their orientation is internal to the organization and short-range. They tend to operate with tight controls. Although they are efficient, these decision makers have a high need for security and status. They have the drive required to achieve results, but they also want to dominate others.
- *Analytic:* This decision maker has a much greater tolerance for ambiguity than the directive style manager and also has a more cognitively complex personality that leads to the desire for more information and the consideration of many alternatives. Because of the focus on technical decisions and the need for control, there is an autocratic bent. The analytic style is typified by the ability to cope with new situations in a structured manner. As a result, this style enjoys problem solving and strives for the maximum that can be achieved in a given situation. Position and ego are important characteristics possessed by the leader. Consequently, these leaders often reach top posts in an organization or start their own companies. They are not particularly quick in their decision-making, and they enjoy variety and prefer written reports. They also enjoy challenges and examine every detail in a situation.
- *Conceptual:* Having high cognitive complexity and a people orientation, this style tends to use data from multiple sources and considers many alternatives. Similar to the behavioral style, there is trust and openness in relationships and shared goals with subordinates. These individuals tend to be idealists who may emphasize ethics and values in their behavior. They generally are creative and can readily understand complex relationships. Their focus is long-range with high organizational commitment. They are achievement-oriented and value praise,

recognition, and independence. They prefer empowering their subordinates over power and will frequently encourage participation of those they lead. They may be characterized as thinkers rather than doers.

- *Behavioral:* Although low on the cognitive complexity scale, this leader has a deep concern for the organization and development of people. Behavioral style managers tend to be supportive and are concerned with subordinates well being. They provide counseling, are receptive to suggestions, communicate easily, show warmth, are empathetic, are persuasive, and are willing to compromise and accept a looser control. With low data input, this style tends toward short-range focus and uses meetings primarily for communicating. These managers avoid conflict, seek acceptance, and tend to be more people-oriented but sometimes are insecure.

Discussion

For leaders to gain acceptance of organizational change, there are a series of factors that need to be understood. The first and foremost is to understand the “human side” of transformational change. Inevitably issues are destined to arise. There will be new leaders, new jobs, and new skills that will be needed. This creates uncertainty and resistance follows. The method that the organization deals with this may determine morale and acceptance. This method demands data collection, analytic planning, and implementation processes as possible. This method should be based on a timely assessment of the readiness for change.

Another consideration is to start with strategic management. Everyone in the organization will look to the top for leadership during the process of change. The leaders must articulate the vision and the challenge faced to motivate others. The vision must be consistent and speak with one voice as to the changes and they must model the desired behavior necessary for change. They are aligned and committed to the direction of change, understand the culture and behaviors the changes intend to introduce, and can model those changes themselves.

A further consideration is for the leadership to insure there is a sense of ownership and communicating the message. This ownership requires more than mere buy-in or passive agreement that the direction of change is acceptable. Ownership is often best created by involving people in identifying problems and crafting solutions. It is reinforced by incentives and rewards such as financial compensation or psychological. Too often, change leaders make the mistake of believing that others understand the issues, feel the need to change, and see the new direction as clearly as they do. The best change programs reinforce core messages through regular, timely advice that is both inspirational and practicable.

Conclusions

No change program will go exactly according to plan. People that are involved will react in unexpected ways. To effectively manage change requires constant reevaluation of the force of the change and mentoring the willingness to adopt the next wave of transformation. Fed by real data from the field and supported by information and solid decision-making processes, change leaders can then make the adjustments necessary to maintain momentum and drive results. The organization must reassure the individuals that this very personal (as perceived by the individual) change is both an institutional journey. Individuals spend most of the daily hours at work and many consider it their second family. The individual will need to know how their work will change and what the organization will expect from them going forward.

They need to know how the change will affect them and what will constitute success or failure explicitly. This action merits the need for rewards that success or failure will mean for them and those around them. Team leaders should be as honest and explicit as possible. People will react to what they see and hear around them, and need to be involved in the change process. Highly visible rewards, such as promotion, recognition, and bonuses, should be provided as dramatic reinforcement for embracing change. Sanction or removal of people standing in the way of change will reinforce the institution's commitment.

Most leaders contemplating change know that people matter. It is all too tempting, however, to dwell on the plans and processes, which do not talk back and do not respond emotionally, rather than face up to the more difficult and more critical human issues. Mastering the “soft” side of change management needn’t be a mystery.

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