

CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

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Abstract: Changes are one of the most typical phenomena experienced by contemporary organizations and are an inherent element of their functioning. The change introduction process is complex and it is often accompanied by a phenomenon of resistance to change on the part of the employees in an organization, which is considered as the main cause of failure in the change implementation process. The purpose of the article is to discuss the basic conditions for implementing changes related both to their adequate defining and overcoming resistance to change.

1 Introduction

A necessary condition for survival of contemporary organizations is the development of adaptation abilities through internal transformations. Changes are thereby an integral element of functioning of an organization – lack, omission or interruption of changes prevent an organization from surviving. Furthermore, organizations during transformation often must reject everything which was effective for them in the past to survive. The need for introducing changes depends on both external conditions (necessity to face economic, qualitative, technological, ecological and social challenges) and internal conditions (maturing of an organization, evolution of its culture, increasing experience of people employed, changing employee attitudes). Changes may relate to strategic assumptions, procedures of internal structure, management methods and techniques, type of produced goods and provided services, manufacturing technology, reorganization of work environment, etc. The purpose of the paper is to discuss basic (nodal) conditions of implementing changes

2 ABC of the change process planning

A base for proper determining the extent and type of all necessary changes is defining the needs of a specified business entity. It requires an exact identification of problem areas existing in an organization. The situation should be assessed in a possibly holistic manner¹, to diagnose type, importance and causes of problems present in an organization. The more precisely defined problematic areas are the easier it is to adequately determine goal of changes (and thus, finally, results important for an organization) and the scopes of changes in their:

- objective aspect – i.e. issues to which changes will apply to (and what should be changed?)
- subjective aspect – i.e. which group of employees will be covered by the change process (whom changes will relate to?)
- time aspect – what are the time frames (when should changes take place?).

The determined goal of changes should be recorded in writing. At this point, it should be noted that, since organizations are open and poly-structural systems [1], achieving the goals set by organizations stimulates cooperation of their different subsystems. To achieve measurable effects, it would be then indicated that the process of changes, even when it solely refers to some part of an organization, should include linkages and connections between different aspects of the functioning of an organization as a whole².

Particularization of the outlined vision of changes after determining the goal and after defining their objective, subjective and time scope requires essentially:

- determining measures which, in the financial aspect, may be allocated for the needs of pursuing precisely defined expectations,
- determining who will comprise the team responsible for changes,
- preparing a schedule of changes (along with planning specific intermediate stages and way of measuring the achieved results in the change process).

Additionally, making any decisions or undertaking activities requires considering first of all three facts. Firstly, for objective reasons, the implementation of organizational changes must proceed simultaneously with normal operations of an organization.

Secondly, organizations are also social systems, and hence without the ability to mobilize employee energy, no

¹ For instance, it is worth analysing the structure of a given organization; type of services provided/assortment; quality of services/products; types of relationships between different units of an organization; type of processes implemented as part of it; direction of the course of processes; number and type of process participants; type of technologies used.

² After all, the practice shows that introducing changes in only one area of a company's operations normally brings small benefits.

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change – no matter how spectacular – will be a sustainable change [2].

Thirdly, it is worth treating a change as a flexible process that can (and even should) be adjusted to the changing situation.

3 Resistance to change and methods of overcoming it

A natural reaction of people to a disturbance of the existing *status quo* is the phenomenon of *resistance to change*. In the opinion of H. Steinmann and G. Schreyögg [3], it means essentially *an emotional blockade* towards changes. Resistance as a type of mental condition (conscious or unconscious) may make employees both undertake moves making it impossible (hindering) to introduce and maintain changes, and refrain from undertaking activities contributing to introducing changes in the event when these depend on the employees themselves. The first case shows active resistance and the second case shows passive resistance. Resistance to change may have a unit, group or even global form (including all the employed) and may be expressed, for instance, in open criticism of superiors, creation of resistance groups among employee teams, growth in fluctuation and absence indicators or reduced work efficiency. Sources of resistance are much diversified. Among the main reasons for its occurrence, the following are indicated [4]:

- lack of perceiving the sense of change by employees,
 - uncertainty as to effects and/or reasons for changes,
 - aware of weaknesses of the proposed changes,
 - fear against loss of the appreciated values (a threat for own interests),
 - feeling of imposing (forcing) a change
- and
- a change program breaching an informal network of interpersonal relations.

Resistance appears thus whenever the employees have the feeling that changes fail to meet their core needs as [5]:

- safety,
- inclusion and connection,
- power,
- control,
- competence,
- justice and fairness.

The phenomenon of resistance should be neither combated (this may result in its escalation) nor underestimated in any case. Combating and/or underestimating resistance may involve significant in the scale of an organization costs both in the economic and social aspect. The process of overcoming /minimizing resistance plays a priority role in the change process management and should be conducted with observance of

some rules of conduct worked out on the ground of socio-psychological sciences. In the opinion of S. Hornberger and P. Knauth [6], the best method of overcoming any barriers related to change implementation is:

1. informing,
2. communicating,
3. training.

Q 1. An information campaign conducted adequately early prevents gossips from spreading among an organization: those gossips, by providing distorted and/or false information, can significantly hinder introduction of the planned transformations. An information campaign should be targeted to a broad group of employees (optimally, it should cover all of the employed). Under this campaign, it is necessary to:

- explain the reasons for the need of implementing changes,
- determine goals³, benefits and risk related to change implementation,
- discuss the issues related to maintenance/reduction in the number of jobs in an organization.

The transferred information needs to be reliable (true), full (exhaustive), valid, arranged, clear (deprived of contradictory, mutually excluding or inconsistent content).

Q 2. Active, open and multidirectional communication (covering, among others, conversations, discussions, consultations, sessions of questions, working meetings, development and agreement of common positions, etc.) is considered as a reliable antidote against uncertainty related to changes. Although the communication itself does not eliminate resistance to change, it allows, however, reducing the degree of its intensity. Communicating is a process underlying any kind of effective interaction between individuals. Not only does it enable coordination of the taken activities, but also satisfies, in the pragmatic, cognitive and emotional aspect, current and prospective needs of interacting individuals. Quality of communication in an organization has, among others, effect on motivation of employees and their satisfaction with work. Lack of active communication impedes transfer of values and knowledge significant from the point of view of an organization. Creation of relevant "mental models" of employees, building agreement and community among them requires, first of all, involvement in active communication [7]. It is advised to use such communication techniques as: MBWA (manager by wandering about), briefings and working meetings, official messages, websites.

³ The main goal and partial goals important from the point of view of achieving the main goal.

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Q 3. Properly selected and delivered trainings for people affected by change help a change to rise because they lead to modification of the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the employees. Through trainings, it is possible to understand some phenomena and dependencies learn proper methods/schemes of procedure in certain situations and gain necessary knowledge under controlled "safe" conditions. It results in shaping in the trainees, firstly, a kind of openness to changes (development of adequate attitudes of the employees) and, secondly, some dispositions as to their likely behaviours with regard to specific situations (also situations new for them, because properly selected and delivered trainings prepare them for efficient functioning under new conditions related to change). Even in the case when, from the point of view of training participants, training does not bring new or original content, a change takes place due to finding, naming and arranging knowledge already held by the participants. Additionally, training may enable the personnel to develop.

In the process of introducing changes a significant importance is attained also to employee participation and properly shaped organizational culture.

Participation raises commitment and the so-called share of human factor; provided that, in order to overcome their aversion to change, employee activity must consist of three following factors: access to information, impact on decision-making and interaction [8]. Principles of active employee participation in making decisions related to changes (including: identification and determination of a problem, collection of information about problematic situations, creation of possible solutions, evaluation of alternatives, selection of solution), and cooperation during their introduction (both during implementation of decisions and evaluation of change implementation results) are regarded as "golden rules" of successful organizational changes [9]. It can be justified. Common planning of a change process and its implementation allows the employees to perceive the sense of changes and build a sense of personal control over situation (no feeling of compulsion among the employed). Furthermore, group action allows reducing the level of fear and increases the probability of eliminating/adjusting moves unfavourable from the point of view of the whole organization.

The organizational culture should be treated as a constituent element of the change process internal conditions [10]. It can be said that the sustainability of introduced changes is connected, first of all, with the degree of their rooting in the organizational culture. K.S. Cameron and R.E. Quinn indicate, as causes of failure of a considerable part of programs of organizational transformation, forcing of changes incompatible with the organizational culture [11]. The organizational culture is characterized by a considerable degree of content rigidity and is not shaped easily. This does not mean, however,

that it is impossible to conduct a conscious and controlled process of cultural transformation. Consequently, in the opinion of L. Clarce [12]: *"building a culture that would match a dynamic and variable market is one of new organizational challenges. This is, however, a process laborious, long lasting and requiring commitment of both employees and management of an organization"*.

Conclusions

For a transformation to be successful, of which changes are to be support, the process of changes should be adequately prepared. It is necessary to take care of such issues as: evaluation of the need for a change by an analysis of problematic scopes in an organization, preparation of a change vision with a corresponding schedule (including planning of specific intermediate stages), appointment of a team responsible for change implementation, measurement of the results achieved in the process of changes and reinforcement of the new approach. It is particularly important to pursue those actions in a manner contributing to minimizing (overcoming) the phenomenon of resistance to change. Therefore pursuing organizational changes requires a planned and complex communicating of changes to people, building of open communication, acquisition and involving employees in the process of changes and building of an organizational culture in which the postulated above elements are deeply embedded.

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