

The Impact of Organizational Culture on Change Initiatives

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Many organizations undergo change in an attempt to guarantee the survival of their business. Change is always constant. And it has become inevitable regardless of the business industry (Chiloane-Tsoka 2013). According to Chiloane-Tsoka (2013), “Organizations need to change to accommodate internal developments and be able to respond and adapt to external factors,” (p. 15). And organizational culture plays a significant role. Since the 1980’s it has received an increase in attention as being an important component of organizational success (Zhou-Sivunen 2005).

There are specific things that must be engrained within a culture to make it “change friendly.” I believe it’s fair to say it’s common knowledge people are resistant to change. According to Chiloane-Tsoka (2013), “Most scholars attribute resistance to change to be imbedded in the organizational culture.” With that in mind, when an organization undergoes major change, management must make a concerted effort to support the organization’s team members, and respect the psychological contract that exists with them (Odagiu 2013). Furthermore, as the author suggests, members of management must develop interactive communication skills and be able to demonstrate and effectively communicate the need for change (Odagiu 2013). This will ultimately contribute to a more positive organizational culture, and increase the likelihood of successful outcomes in the change process.

In the review of the literature, I’ve identified five characteristics of skills that are necessary for an organization to be an effective leader of change. They are:

1. A firm commitment to values and organizational ethics

2. Having a clear vision and strategy in place to drive the initiatives of the organization
3. Full support of employees throughout the organization
4. Organizational readiness; in other words, a behavioral commitment to organizational change, and the willingness to remove change barriers
5. Full management support of change initiatives

In light of the five characteristics identified, one can conclude that all stakeholders within the organization have a role to play in ensuring that successful change takes place. In my professional opinion, a firm commitment to ethics takes top priority. As Burnes and By (2012) suggested, “in order to achieve sustainable and beneficial change, those who promote and adopt particular approaches to leadership and change must provide greater ethical clarity...” (p. 239). It’s hard to have successful change without effective leadership – they go hand in hand.

Although some of the other characteristics may appear “soft” in nature, it’s important not to undermine the impact they may have on implementing success change initiatives. Burnes and By further state that successful change agents have these following characteristics:

- They are committed to increased organizational effectiveness
- They empower employees to take action
- They create openness in communication
- They promote a culture of collaboration
- They promote continuous learning (2012).

In conclusion, change is constant in today's dynamic and competitive business environment, and organizational culture plays a significant role in whether or not change initiatives and outcomes are successful. At the end of the day, organizational culture is made manifest in an organization's values and philosophies; its leadership; and in the attitudes and behaviors of its team members (Chiloane-Tsoka 2012). It's a powerful force.

With that being said, it's important to note that despite the impact organizational culture plays in driving change initiatives, there are specific organizational skills and characteristics that must be in place for successful organizational change to take place.

References

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