

Managing Change Throughout Multiple Organizational Levels

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Regardless of how ready an organization believes it is to begin the change process, organizational change is not only difficult and complex, it is hard to manage. This is the case regardless of whether change is occurring at the employee level, team level, or organizational level. Unfortunately, change is inevitable, and required in many organizations. Alan Clardy (2013) states that the forces demanding change of today's organizations come from several sources: these include global competition; an aging, and more diverse workforce that lacks basic skills; technological change; unstable public policies; and demanding customers. With that being said, there are best practices for managing the change process. In this paper, I will examine factors impacting change at the employee, team, and organizational levels.

Employee Level

Change occurs at all levels throughout an organization. However, Keith Ferrazzi (2014) states, "Organizations can't change their culture unless individual employees change their behavior – and changing behavior is hard," (p. 23). The primary challenge with change at the employee level is that employees don't change until they are ready. In turn, an organization can't force people to change – it can only help them want to (Ferrazzi 2014).

Organizations can influence change at the employee level. It requires a shift from resistance and resentment regarding change to a more positive, more optimistic mindset. The challenge lies in that an employee's mindset is hard to measure, and it's hard to change someone's mind (Ferrazzi 2014). Anderson (2010) further states, "The cornerstones of our mindset are our core beliefs and values we hold about ourselves,

others and life in general, that is, our fundamental assumptions about reality,” (p. 162). In other words, if an organization expects to positively shift an employee’s mindset, they must not only have a solid understanding of what each employee’s unique values and core beliefs are, they must convince them to shift their paradigms of established business practices, and encourage them to adopt new ways of thinking: not an easy task.

Team Level

Change at the team level will have some of the same challenges that change at the employee level has. For example, teams are made up of a number of different employees, all of whom have their own set of values, beliefs, and ways of thinking. One advantage of change at the team level is that you have access to peer groups. According to Ferrazzi (2014), when employees are brought together in groups (or teams), they can discuss change initiatives; create accountability; mutual generosity; a judgment-free attitude; and pressure from other members of the team on employees who may be reluctant to change.

Change at the team level also opens up the door for peer mentorship, which 70% of Fortune 500 companies use with their salespeople (Ferrazzi 2014). Not only can this create more positivity during the change process, “Pairing these role models with slower-to-adopt colleagues can be far more effective than coaching by outside experts,” (Ferrazzi 2014, p. 24).

Organizational Level

In my professional opinion, organizational change is a culmination of the things it requires to be successful at both the employee and team levels. It really is an

extensive process. For example, Clardy (2013) discusses the six steps that Hammer and Champy identified in 2001. They are:

1. Create a powerful message regarding the need for change
2. Gain support from top-level management
3. Prepare organizational leaders
4. Empower team members
5. Carry out the actual change process
6. Create a new performance management system

It's important to note that successful organizational change is not guaranteed. It may take much longer than originally anticipated, and require additional effort, attention, and revamped strategic changes. At the end of the day, the overall goal is to increase the chance that the proposed change is successful, despite the challenges that may have to be overcome during the process.

Ethical Implications

In order for an organization to effectively manage change, it must consider ethics; not only in the strategy, but also in the implementation of change, and the treatment of all organizational members in the process. Leadership impacts this process greatly. Burnes & By (2012) state all organizational stakeholders have a role to play, as well as a responsibility in ensuring ethical outcomes in the change process. They further conclude, "in order to achieve sustainable and beneficial change, those who promote and adapt particular approaches to leadership must provide greater ethical clarity about the approaches they are championing," (p. 239). In other words, leadership, ethics, and change go hand in hand.

Conclusion

In conclusion, managing change is becoming as important as supervising performance (Clardy 2013). Regardless of how ready an organization believes it is to begin the change process, it's not only difficult and complex, it's hard to manage – regardless of the level. Whether change occurs at the employee level, team level, or organizational level, each level has its own unique set of challenges. However, one common thread is the role ethics play in the change process. Good ethics not only lay a solid foundation for organizational excellence, they ensure change occurs throughout the organization with the best interests of everyone involved. Although this ethical approach doesn't ensure a smooth, successful change process, it does increase the likelihood that an organization and its team members will come out for the better on the other side.

References

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