Overcoming Employees Resistance to Change Aimed at Organisational Growth

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Abstract

Changes are common in organisational practice. However, the need for changes has to be constantly observed with reference to organisational functioning. When changes for organisational growth and development is felt to be inevitable proper design to introduce appropriate changes and gain acceptance from all Stakeholders takes priority. A volume of concepts and guidelines are available on the subject in published literature for organisational practice. The following article is aimed at helping practicing managers when they face the challenges of planning and introducing organisational changes.

Keywords: Organisational growth – Design – Plans for change – acceptance – Resistance by Stakeholders – Human organisational and social reaction – options for design – implementing changes.

Introduction:

Organisations are developing entities. The development becomes necessary to cope-up with social political and economical changes that affect the functioning of the organizations. Organizations resort to development activity to fulfill continued growth. These conditions result in dealing with issues that arise due to the dynamics of organizational changes. This leads to designing and implementing change plans.

It is often said that nothing is permanent as changes. In organizational context any design to change brings about the following changes to be successfully dealt with

1) Change in investment pattern.

2) Need to observe and tackle changes in technology.

3) Understanding changing customer behaviour

4) To device changes in organization structure as well as short term and long term practices.

Most importantly, to predict people – acceptance to changes and develop policies to overcome resistance to change.

Key Concepts:

Organisational change is essentially a human factor. Organisational effort to change is met with acceptance or rejection by various levels of people in the organization. People accept changes if they believe that the proposed changes will be beneficial to them. Otherwise, there may be strong resistance to such changes. These human reactions happen due to psychological factors like complacency and anticipated fear of changes.

Personal Reasons:

The following list indicates possible human reactions to change more precisely.

1) Employees negative attitude to anything that requires changes in their present behavioural patterns on their job.

2) Employees may be afraid that their established power to deal with management actions may be lost.

3) Employees may resist change when the future is unknown.

4) Employees may fear their relative position with reference to employees in comparable organisations may get disturbed.

5) Changes may be resisted if employees foresee loss of security on their job.

6) Employees may resist changing if they believe that their existing relations with others in the organization may be disturbed.

7) In essence, employees to resist changing if they anticipate a paradigm shift in their existing work environment.

8) Employees may be least interested in bringing about changes.

Organisational Reasons:

Organiational reasons for resisting change:

1) Size and complexity of the organsiation

2) Organisation falling into a dysfunctional culture due to changes

3) Managers / Supervisors may also become a source to resist changes

4) Lack of Trust in the outcome from the proposed changes

5) Fear of changes in organisational politics

6) Changes may cause internal conflicts among employees and hence an unwillingness to any changes in their existing environment

7) The general lack of understanding of proposed changes among the employees

8) Changes particularly when they are frequent in nature, cause fatigue in employees.

9) Prior investment of employees talents and other business resources may cause resistance to changes

10) Making optimum use of available resources may cause difficulty in implementing changes.

11) Impact of change on stakeholder's reactions may cause implementing of changes smooth or difficult.

People show resistance to change for the following causes:

1. Disturbance in Existing Equilibrium

People resist change if they perceive that the proposed changes are not matching with their interest. Instead, the changes may seriously cause disturbance in the existing conditions. The general feeling among people is that every change is resisted by the employees, though it may prove beneficial to them in the long run.

2. Imbalance in Need Satisfaction:

Employees belief that periodical decrease or prevention of existing need satisfaction conditions may change for worse.

3. Insecurity to Job:

A quick and violent resistance is possible from employees whenever changes or proposed due to introduction of automatic machinery or technological changes that may threaten the employees in terms of being rendered excess and hence laid off. Even minor change are revision of policy and procedure may evoke resistance profoundly.

4. Fear of loss in material benefits:

Some changes may cause economic loss such as loss of earnings, abolition or promotional avenues etc. This becomes critical in the case of elderly employees who may have difficulty in learning new skills.

5. Change affects emotion:

People may become psychologically sensitive to accept and live with changes. They become emotionally reluctant to accept changes.

6. Lack of clarity in proposed changes:

Management must take extra care to explain the proposed changes and its likely impact on the life of employees. They should clarify how all factors have been taken care of keeping the employees benefits in mind. The employees must be provided chance to involve themselves in working out the changes and practicing them under non-threatening condition.

7. Disturbance of social relationship:

Change is likely to disturb the social relationship. Some persons are very loyal to their group. Change may affect groups, norms, customs, etc. or even the composition itself. When a group is broken and a new group is to be formed, it is a very frustrating situation. This kind of disturbance occurs where jobs are transferable. Family life of a person, who is transferred to some other place of the same organization, is disturbed and he is to start afresh in a new environment.

8. Illogical position by sections of employees

In spite of the best efforts taken by management to implement changes there may be some sections of employees who may resist change without any valid reasons to understand the pros and cons of proposed changes. Such illogical resistance has to be resolved by the management through special efforts.

Resistance to change by employer (or) management:

a. Increase in responsibility:

Any organizational change is bound to impose new responsibility for the management. This request additional effort to be taken up by management. Therefore, there may be initial resistance to accept to changing conditions.

b. Change proposed by Govt. and Labour Union:

There may be occasions where labour unions propose changes to be implemented in the organisation. This may be viewed as an insult to management ability to manage the organisations. This may lead management to resist such proposal.

Every industry or organization is governed by governmental laws and rules and regulations. Changes attributed to Governmental laws become have to be compulsorily implemented. These conditions imposed additional burden on the management. Therefore, management may try to resist these changes if possible.

c. Change on experimental basis:

Management may plan to introduce certain changes to evaluate or verify the outcome of those changes on experimental basis. They may proceed to make the changes permanent if they find the changes to be beneficial. Otherwise, they may reject the proposal. Sometimes changes may become necessary due to unanticipated situations. In such cases, changes are tackled as appropriate to the situation.

Successfully overcoming resistance to change:

1) By introducing systems for participation of employees and trade unions. It may involve consultation with the employees during all stages of planning for changes, seeking suggestions and modifications in the proposed changes.

2) Taking care to practice two way communication.

3) Change should be timely.

4) Changes should be evolutionary in nature. This requires pre planning sufficiently in advance

5) Integrating logical, psychological and sociological aspects of change

6) Proper pre-structuring of organsiation like management responsibilities, supervisory concerns and organized work groups

7) By planning to design and introducing organizational practices most conducive for proposed changes. It may include the following:

   a. Protecting economic loss

   b. Persuading employees to accept training to acquire new skills

   c. By protecting seniority status quo

   d. By introducing most desirable grievances handling procedures

   e. By avoiding trivial and unnecessary change to harass the workers

   f. By introducing proper standardization of work

   g. By keeping options open for altering proposed changes either by negotiation or by arbitration

   h. Where necessary explicit or implicit coercion may also be helpful on certain occasions

Desirable consequences of resistance to change:

Changes sometimes may be unwarranted but may satisfy the egoistic needs of management. In such cases, suitable plans to alter the changes may be introduced. Genuine changes should also focus attention on certain desirable causes of resistance to change. Such as:

➢ Lack of convincing cost benefit comparison.

➢ Proposed changes indicate possible lower morale and motivation among employees.

➢ When it points to lack of management ability and organisational behavior

➢ When changes are left to be decided by specialists, management should be watchful not to resort to coercion in implementing them for psychological and social reasons.

Conclusion:

Organisational growth is always a committed policy of management. A constant assessment of the established causes when employee resist such changes, they need to be watched carefully to plan well-designed change efforts and implement them smoothly. The above article presents a review of existing literature on resistance to organisational changes and presents all approaches to implement organisational changes.

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