Managing Organizational Change

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Organizational change refers to the process through which an organization undergoes strategic, structural, operational, cultural and technological changes. Successful management of change is crucial to an organization as it enables the organization to succeed and survive in the current competitive and continually evolving business environment (Carnall). In this essence, no organization or business entity is immune from the inexorable change. The need for organizational change occurs in two different stages, which are referred to as the crisis stage and the reactive stage. The change process is planned by managers to ensure its success and achievement of set goals. A planned and healthy change process is expected to empower employees rather than make them defensive and insecure during the organizational change process. Today, corporate change is inevitable; this is due to the tremendous changes that arise from economic turbulence, rapid technological advances, workplace diversity, knowledge management and business globalization.

The change process constitutes the change-stability dilemma, which can be understood by gaining a glimpse of what the future holds for the business. Firms are faced with both internal and external pressure, forcing the organization to initiate the change process. Increased turnover, absenteeism, strikes, sabotages, and low productivity also force organizations to opt for new changes to curb these negative factors that affect the firm's operations. Organizational change represents a response to changes that take place in the internal and external environments of a business entity. Examples of business changes include venturing into new products, adopting new initiatives and strategies such as quality improvement, cost reduction and system changes, acquisitions, mergers, and reorganizations.

Every organization that requires a strategic change and renewal is usually due to the existence of a convincing possible threat that affects the performance of the organization. As indicated earlier, an organizational change in global organizations is incorporated two stages. The reactive stage is characterized by the declining performance of the organization as a result of the environmental shift. This stage acts as a change initiative as managers start acknowledging the existence of possible threats that directly impact the output. During this stage, managers need to formulate a practical and theoretical framework that will guide the organization towards the anticipated change. The other stage, the crisis stage, is characterized by evident problems that are observed and experienced by all organizational employees. This stage calls for abrupt and rapid changes in order for the organization to survive and continue with its daily operations.

Understanding the factors and requirements needed for a successful organizational change, as well as preparing for the demanded organizational change, aids management in guiding the organization through the planned organizational change process. According to Carnall, "organizational transformation includes a re-organization process that is accompanied by important changes for the employee working conditions, behaviour and ways of increasing output." In preparation for a successful change, several guidelines are incorporated in order to commission a satisfactory change and attain the full benefits of it. These guidelines include norms awareness, analysis of diversity within and between different organizational units, availability of enough workforce and supervision, role clarification and constructive conflict.

Norm awareness is the initial core step towards a healthy and prosperous change process. This includes the analysis of local organizational norms which are inherent in the corporate culture. The significance of these norms is that they affect the employee experience during the process of change. Since the existing and established regulatory criteria may not be applicable in dealing with the proposed change, managers need to develop new values and organizational attitudes in order to counteract and supplement the unsuitable criteria. In developing these desired norms, the management is required to consider employee participation in order to establish universal and effective new universal norms.

Another requirement for change preparation is diversity awareness. This allows the managers to understand and project different reactions as a result of the organizational change. The consideration of diversity allows managers to establish discrepancies in emotional and cognitive orientations between and amongst employees. Formulating a strategy that incorporates functional tools to address diversity ensures that the managers have substantial knowledge and are fully prepared for possibilities for conflict of interest, which are attributed to employee diversity.

Additionally, in preparing for change, managers should gather adequate information necessary to make an organizational change. This information includes information on new behaviours, systems, programs and strategies that will be implemented. Collecting this information ensures that the managers have knowledge on how to change the organization and hence be prone to success. This information would also include the sectors which need to be transformed for the betterment of the organization’s performance.

In preparation for the idea of change, managers are required to be completely honest with themselves, the employees and all the stakeholders involved. This acts as an essential step in commissioning a successful transition. Firstly, the managers are required to admit the need for change and formulate the corresponding measures to actualize the idea for change. This includes an open discussion with all the stakeholders involved in order to attain realistic opinions. Involving every contributor to the organization will be beneficial in the adoption of the outlined change as none of the stakeholders will react kindly if completely left out of the loop of the upcoming change. Also, open discussion will help the managers gain suggestions and concerns, which will help in decision-making and formulation of strategies that are acceptable and practicable to the stakeholders involved.

Mapping out the whole change process is ideal as it involves setting forth the pathway that will be adopted to achieve the objectives. The start of the change process requires a map of the anticipated plan in a way that includes what is expected of all organizational units. The developed map enables the management to pinpoint challenges and opportunities when the change process begins. Also, this process ensures that the organization is well-prepared for problems which are likely to arise during the change. The impact analysis of the whole change process allows the management to establish the degree of change in different segments of the group. Every unit in the organization is unique and requires different tactics to address the challenges the unit is facing regarding the impact of the change. In preparing the change management strategy, the managers involved in planning use the audience impact analysis in managing change.

Analyzing the project risks ensures that the management commissions a background check of the change characteristics, as each change project is attributed to different risk factors. The change characteristics and organizational attributes are normally defined with project risk. From this analysis, a change management assessment is developed, which includes high, medium and low risks associated with the change process. The communication of these risks before the start of the change process allows for a risk assessment process, which develops a pathway to determine the need for particular change management tactics that will be necessary in order to mitigate these risks. Special tactics are incorporated to elevate possible resistance before the planned organizational change begins.

Lastly, the leadership of the change process is expected to do extensive research on the change process. This is because leading an organizational change demands skills and knowledge which are mostly acquired from the study of other experts' experiences in this field. Subsequently, managers can seek academic expertise from reputable institutions by attending courses designed to equip them with the necessary expertise on transaction and organizational change. Gaining management experience before commencing with the organizational change ensures the involved managers are fully equipped to manage the upcoming change successfully. The leadership styles perform a significant function in change management planning. This is because centralized leadership ensures that the change process has a simpler sponsorship model, which conversely guides and manages the whole process successfully.

The primary step to a successful organizational change relies on the ability to admit that a change is needed in the organization. Advanced preparation for organizational change initiatives is significant. To initiate a change, managers must understand what is required of them to achieve their desired change. Many business transformation processes fail due to the lack of enough preparation for the oncoming changes as well as failure to understand the current market structures and demands.

In initiating change, organizational managers should first know what needs to be changed and why. The benefits and effects arising from the change should also be understood in order to ensure its success (French et al.). The organizational stakeholders should also be made aware of the anticipated organizational changes. Personally, I believe investing employees in the company change process is decisive and significant. This is because the process of organizational change encompasses the entire organization's stakeholders, who drive the organization towards success by ensuring the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. Initiating change involves a critical process which is bound to affect everyone within the organization. Therefore, due to the vulnerability of the change process, overall support is required from the stakeholders, partners, clients and all the business executives. However, the first people who need to support the project are the top executive leaders. With the support of the top management, the process of transforming the company is bound to succeed.

Additionally, in initiating change, competent leaders with expertise and management skills need to take charge of the organizational change process. An external or internal executive can oversee the change project to ensure its success. Strong and devoted leaders are paramount and responsible for the change process. These leaders also allocate resources to support the change initiatives. Moreover, competent leaders help mitigate the challenges that come with the change process. A decisive factor that influences organizational change is the leadership role, as the workers are affected by how the change process is handled but not the type of change being implemented. In this essence, the management is required to pay more attention to managing the organizational change. Correspondingly, the leaders of the organization are essential in initiating change as they act as arbitrators in cases of conflict of interest and balance the organizational change effect.

Having a clear vision is also decisive and significant in initiating change. Everyone in the company needs to be convinced of the importance of the change as well as the desired outcome of the changes being anticipated. This implies that a clear vision must be established and made clear to everyone within the organization. The clear vision also enables the entire organization to work towards the same direction and attain similar goals. Lack of clarity and communication of the change misaligns the efforts to drive organizational change. Additionally, a lack of a clear vision is believed to demotivate employees and cause resistance to the changes.

On a larger scale, the change process demands a greater level of accountability. A clear plan should be measured against the desired future outcome as well as the current business performance. The current business performance and progress should also be accounted for to measure the future success of the change initiated. Lack of constant accountability may cause the employees to lose focus and retaliate to old business operations. This is why accountability must be a priority in initiating and completing the change project. Accountability ensures that the implemented changes are wholly ingrained in the company operations permanently.

Constant dialogue and communication should also be adopted in the process of initiating organizational change. The process of changing the organization into a virtually new entity might cause tension and, hence, resistance from the team members. Therefore, direct and honest communication schemes should be incorporated into the workplace to ensure a cooperative and productive environment during the change process. Additionally, open dialogues help to garner different opinions and ideologies regarding the implementation of change, which can have a positive impact on the change process. Communicating with the employees helps them avoid unnecessary fears and assumptions that might come along with the introduction of the change and also helps them know how the change will impact them.

In order to enforce successful change management, Measures such as employee training and development can be adopted. These measures enable the employees to gain skills and knowledge on how to take advantage of the changes (Thomas). Additionally, training the employees enables them to view the change in a positive way and also recognize the positive results that seemed to come along with the change. The skills and knowledge gained are also vital in helping the employees to achieve and reach their expectations. Training also helps the employees to refrain from their old habits and adopt new ones. This would involve integrating with the new ways of doing things in the workplace.

Implementing stress management approaches is also significant in enforcing changes. The managers can also negotiate with the employees and persuade them to support the changes. In stress management programs, the employees are given an opportunity to discuss their concerns in regard to the change process. Employee concerns should, in turn, be taken into consideration to ensure employees' job satisfaction. Adjustments can also be made in favour of the employees' concerns, provided that they are intellectual and decisive. Evaluating the employee's progress would also be significant in determining the employee's compliance performance in accordance with the newly initiated changes.

Celebrations can also be made to celebrate the new changes. This enables the employees to recognize the changes and, hence, in turn, recall them. The changes are also made public through meetings to announce the achievements. Celebrating changes enables morale and support for the initiated changes. Employee motivation and commitment to the new organizational change also speed up the success of the change. During the celebrations, the managers can also give direct feedback to the employees on their new performance in relevance to the new changes. The managers can also get a chance to thank the employees for their cooperation during the change process. Misconceptions about the changes can also be corrected to avoid resistance.

Compensation and appraisal systems can also be incorporated into the organization to enforce change. The employees who show compliance with the new changes can be well compensated. This would, in turn, motivate other people to comply with the organizational transformations. Visible and public recognition strategies can also be applicable in attracting more support for the changes. Incentives that directly support the changes can also be initiated to ensure employees' support. In other words, a lot of concerted effort is required to provide the permanent adoption of the implemented changes. Rewards should also be increased for employees who adopt the new changes.

Reinforcement should also be set from the individual's frame. In this essence, reinforcement aims to impact the employees' behaviour toward the desired changes. It should have a meaning and impact on the employees and the organization as a whole. The employees should also be provided with change motives that motivate them. The employees should also be provided with the opportunities promised during the initiation process in order to ensure that the changes bring about positive consequences to the employees and the organization. For instance, opportunities such as employee superiority can be granted to the employees and hence hold them accountable in their job positions.

Conclusion

The current business environment is changing rapidly, and hence, it requires organizations to continually incorporate organizational change for the purpose of maintaining a competitive advantage and meeting organizational goals. Organizational change is defined as the process through which an organization undergoes structural, strategic, cultural, operational, and technological changes. Effective management of change is essential to an organization as it allows the organization to succeed and survive in the current competitive and constantly evolving business environment. Currently, organizational change is inevitable as a result of the tremendous changes that arose from knowledge management, economic turbulence, rapid technological advances, workplace diversity, and business globalization. Understanding the factors and requirements expected for a successful organizational change, as well as preparing for the demanded organizational change, helps management guide the organization through the planned organizational change process without discrepancies.

In preparation for change, managers are required to be completely honest with themselves, the employees and all the stakeholders involved. Secondly, the leadership of the change process is expected to do extensive research on the change process. Thirdly, analyzing the project risks ensures that the management commissions a background check of the change characteristics, as each change project is attributed to different risk factors. Fourthly, mapping out the whole change process is ideal as it involves setting forth the pathway that will be adopted to achieve the organizational goals and objectives. For every organization that requires a strategic change and renewal, it is normally due to the existence of a convincing possible threat that affects the performance of the organization.

In initiating change, organizational managers should first know what needs to be changed in order to improve overall performance. By having a clear vision, it is decisive and significant in initiating change. Additionally, in initiating change, competent leaders with expertise and management skills need to take charge of the organizational change process. Constant dialogue and communication should also be adopted in the process of initiating organizational change.

In order to reinforce successful change management, measures such as employee training and development can be adopted. These measures enable the employees to gain skills and knowledge on how to take advantage of the changes. Subsequently, implementing stress management approaches is also significant in enforcing changes. Celebrations can also be made to celebrate the new changes. The managers can also negotiate with the employees and persuade them to support the changes and as well incorporate these changes into the organization’s values. This enables the employees to recognize the changes and, hence, in turn, recall them.

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