

MANAGING CHANGE: SOME THEORETICAL AND APPLICATIVE ASPECTS

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The strategic organizational change aims is the change of procedures and systems, organizational structures and responsibilities but especially acquiring new knowledge and skills. Significant authors (Drucker: 1999; Kotter: 1996; Buckingham & Clifton: 2001), supporters of the theory of strategic leadership show an inclination for the idea of optimal management of an organization, which depends on circumstantial factors as place and time, the individual and the context in which it acts. Many experts who studied organizational change saw as possible the future replacement of the current state, desired only after completion of specific phases, in a certain sequence. In this article we will focus our attention on the reduction phase of resistance to change. The research objectives targeted both theoretical aspects consisting in bringing to the forefront the relevant aspects related to organizational change in the current context and practical aspects related to identifying and analyzing the main elements that make it possible or on the contrary act as brakes in way of introduction and implementation of change. To achieve the research objectives, we used the method of direct observation and the questionnaire method supported by the gathering of more information from the organization's documents (Beton Construct SRL) and support discussions with the employees.

Data processing and analysis revealed that in the organization certain factors exist and manifest that constitute obstacles or inhibit organizational change, namely: the goal of the change is not clear, the rewards of change are not related to the effort needed to make them happen, change determines fear of failure, change is often imposed by coercion, change requires effort and commitment required for employees that think they do not have resources anymore.

Summarizing the results of usage for certain methods and techniques to implement change, we can say that the actions of an authoritarian management must be reduced at a necessary minimum and positive communication and motivation must be improved of those who contributed to the change.

Setting up an effective system to implement changes towards achieving and maintaining performance in our case, limited in time and space at contemporary bihorean space, like practical implication of our study, appears to be related to direct communication, the concentration of communication on solutions and not on problems, creating a climate of trust, time allocation and reconsideration for the notion of failure.

Keywords: strategic organizational change, obstacles, effective system

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1. Introductory elements regarding managing change

Over the years, carefully examining the factors that determine success or failure of an organization was a constant concern of management theorists and practitioners which gradually led to the crystallization of a specific methodology for analysis and strategic direction of business firms. "Strategic Management emerged and was designed as an advanced form of leadership, able to ensure anticipation of changes and to prepare the company to face them successfully, to increase its adaptive capacity and hence its speed of reaction and response to new challenges the business world is facing today" (Naneş 2000:37). Strategic management is often understood as a change management and it is. The literature has identified three types of change, namely: forced / required change, spontaneous change and strategic change, ie change that is chosen and formulated as an option. This requires an attitude and behaviour of anticipated adaption and voluntary organization and activity, in the event of a future environment more or less predictable.

The recent series of negative events with the devastating effects entitles us to say we are speaking about a future increasingly unpredictable. On the agenda of mankind dictated by their early warning signals there are discussions about the emergence of so-called *big shifts* or *inflection points* where the curves that describe the evolutions of different aspects so familiar of our daily routine change direction. A new philosophy, a new way of thinking and action can be obtained only with effort and sometimes the price paid is very high. A great example is that of the ship Titanic, sank 100 years ago. It is important to realize that we must learn from such an accident. The assimilation of the "Titanic effect" submitted by its identifier as: "the size of disasters decreases as people think it possible and even design the prevention or the reduction of their effects" (Watt 1977:84) is, in our opinion, an important pre-requisite in managing strategic change.

The strategic change aims at achieving substantive changes in an organization and is the opposite of small changes, the one that involves unessential changes in the organizational structure, work program or people in different functions of management or execution. The strategic change is a process that lasts, often incomprehensible and painful, which leads people to oppose, either openly or concealed. The strategic change aims is the change of procedures and systems, organizational structures and responsibilities but especially acquiring new knowledge and skills. In the new situation in which they were forced to dive, people need new knowledge and skills to act. In addition, managers need to communicate a vision, a direction to align its people, to motivate and inspire them energy; meaning they must become leaders. "Being a manager means to put people to do what needs to be done. Being a leader means to convince people to want to do what needs to be done" (Bennis 1994). Significant authors (Drucker: 1999; Kotter: 1996; Buckingham & Clifton: 2001), supporters of the theory of strategic leadership show an inclination for the idea of optimal management of an organization, which depends on circumstantial factors as place and time, the individual and the context in which it acts.

There are no few who have asked "*Why change programs do not produce change?*". Michael Beer, published an article with this exact title-question in the "Harvard Business Review" in which he argued that in order to change the behaviour of employees, they should be put in an organizational context, which should impose them roles, responsibilities and new relationships (Beer et al. 1990:158-166). Many experts who studied organizational change saw as possible the future replacement of the current state, desired only after completion of specific phases, in a certain sequence. In this article we will focus our attention on the reduction phase of resistance to change, specifically on finding answers to questions like: What are the elements that determine resistance to change? What is their mechanism of action? What are the reasons why employees show resistance to change? What are their forms of resistance to change? What specific methods and techniques that can reduce resistance to change? Which are the specific situations where it is recommended to use a particular method or technique?

2. Research hypotheses and methodology

The research objectives targeted both theoretical aspects consisting in bringing to the forefront the relevant aspects related to organizational change in the current context and practical aspects related to identifying and analyzing the main elements that make it possible or on the contrary act as brakes in way of introduction and implementation of change. Managing them properly can be an important prerequisite to improving performance.

Hypothesis I: in the organization exists and manifests factors that constitute obstacles or inhibit organizational change; the elimination or reduction of their influence would be a major step forward.

Hypothesis II: the analysis of the effects of certain methods and techniques for change implementation can determine the configuration of a more effective system for implementation of change towards achieving and maintaining performance.

The research was conducted on the Beton Construct company, specialized in processing ballast, the production of sorted and crushed aggregate and manufacturing of concrete. Beton Construct always invested in continuous improvement of product quality, production capacity and technical facilities, becoming since 2008 the local leader in the production of concrete and aggregates. In 2003 the company has benefited from Phare funds that were used for the purchase of a ultramodern sorting and crushing station (production Sweden). The company has 33 employees that operate in different departments: administration, accounting, billing, quality control of products, production of crushed goods, concrete production, transportation, repair and installation for its equipment. Out of the 33 employees, 8 are women and 25 are men. The company is managed by a General Manager, assisted by a Economic Manager and a Technical Manager. In addition, there are 7 persons, 4 heads of departments and 3 persons, TESA responsible. Out of the 33 employees, 20 are skilled workers (60.60%) and 3 are unskilled workers (9.09%). By age, 5 belong to the interval 20-30 years, 10 match the range 30-40 years, 10 correspond to the range 40-50 years and 8 the range 50-60 years. Wages are set according to the quantity of products or work performed, work schedules and rates per unit of product or work.

To achieve the research objectives and hypotheses, we used *the method of direct observation* and *the questionnaire method* supported by the gathering of more information from the *organization's documents* and *support discussions* with the employees. We chose the questionnaire for the following reasons: the respondent can complete the questionnaire at its own pace; the chance to provide information about any doubt; the opportunity to collect additional information through dialogue, as the support factor of the questionnaire; the low cost, providing anonymity; the low influence on the respondent. The questionnaire included 23 questions following circumscribed areas: the importance given to the action of reducing resistance to change; the reasons that determine rejection to changes; agreed methods and techniques for reducing resistance to change. Data processing was performed using SPSS software for statistical processing. The analysis was conducted only for the data collected by the SC Beton Construct SRL, for a sample of 29 persons drawn from different departments and functions, and multiple ranges of age and seniority at work. The questionnaire was answered by: 2 engineers, 2 accountants, 2 economists, 12 workers, 4 technicians, 2 analysts, 2 head offices, 3 persons in leadership positions.

3. Presentation of research outputs

After data processing and analysis the following were revealed:

- the main technique for reducing resistance to change is communication, informing on changes that are intended to be implemented. 64% of respondents were in favor for the existence of a communication on change in the organization;
- there is now a management concern for the continuous training of employees;
- in the case of planned changes, managers adopt a participative management style, during and after the implementation they are more communicative with the staff, adopt a positive attitude towards employee proposals for improving the process. Over 51% of total respondents said that during major change a participative management is practiced, the communication is more used in relation with the employees, employees are asked for their own views on the implementation of change;
- in the methods and techniques used to reduce resistance to change, positive motivation has a low share. This is reflected in days off, bonuses, highlighting in the group, all being placed as a percentage of total motivation less than 15%;
- negative motivation is found in the organization through sanctions, employees fear of losing their jobs (34%), or in conditions of crisis by practicing an authoritarian management, which determines a rapid reduction in the employee's opposition to imposed change (51%);
- influence / manipulation (on an average level) is another method used by managers, in a large percentage, in the following ways: presenting the change as the only possible alternative to the

crisis (45%); the presence and action of the group leader, which influences the whole group to comply with changes (51%);

- more influence to the proposed changes is manifested the employees which are more than 45 years old, with a significant 58%, in comparison to young employees that embrace change with a greater flexibility. The reasons are varied, they can arise from a poor communication for the change as a burden compared to the routine that is much favored by this group of employees. On the other hand, people under 45 years manifest an opposition of 8% towards changes, resulting from this the flexibility and adaptation to new requirements and not least the avoidance of routine.

4. Conclusions and Discussions

The analysis of implementation organizational changes in SC Beton Construct SRL, of methods and techniques used to reduce resistance to change allow us to make the following statements:

- employee participation it is and it is not encouraged to identify solutions to business;
- an interest in communicating the changes that are intended to be implemented exists, but not enough objectives oriented;
- in the case of changes implemented in emergency situations, the communication with employees takes place after implementing them;
- there is concern for the continuous training of staff, but predominately technical oriented;
- for some changes an authoritarian management was used;
- very low attention is given to the motivation linked to organizational change;
- employees who are facing the changes feel a great deal of fear, uncertainty and insecurity.

Checking the first research hypothesis. We can say that in the organization certain factors exist and manifest that constitute obstacles or inhibit organizational change, namely: the goal of the change is not clear, the rewards of change are not related to the effort needed to make them happen, change determines fear of failure, change is often imposed by coercion, change requires effort and commitment required for employees that think they do not have resources anymore.

Checking the second research hypothesis. Summarizing the results of usage for certain methods and techniques to implement change, we can say that the actions of an authoritarian management must be reduced at a necessary minimum and positive communication and motivation must be improved of those who contributed to the change.

Setting up an effective system to implement changes towards achieving and maintaining performance in our case, limited in time and space at contemporary bihorean space, *like practical implication of our study*, appears to be related to direct communication, "man to man" according to the principle "live what you say" ("*walk the talk*"). Essential seems to be the concentration of communication on solutions and not on problems ("*finding solutions vs. problem thinking*"). It is rightly said that it is beneficial to implement solutions at 60% than to dream at 100%. It is increasingly clearer the fact that to compete with more power, the company will need to consider developing its people in a environment supporting the manifestation of personality in socialized forms, as an objective as important as producing or delivering goods or services. In our opinion, *essential in the operationalization* of this is *creating a climate of trust, time allocation and reconsideration for the notion of failure*. Seen through the "transformational vocabulary" proposed by Anthony Robbins, when an idea does not provide immediate results, it should not be considered a failure but an experiment. The term used in 2011 by Forbes magazine is "*failling forward*", which emphasizes that any experiment, be it bad, is a step towards the right solution.

In our opinion, for Beton Construct and other bihorean firms, *the recommended change is the strategic change*, a proactive change that seeks to anticipate future changes and potential risks associated with the environment, as well as efficient and effective management by setting courageous goals and action. In planning strategic change, according main findings of our modest study who confirms the guide lines developed by significant authors (Zwilling: 2011; Mehri:

2006: 21-42) it is necessary to consider that its success depends on taking into account the reality that both people and organizations can absorb limited number of changes in a certain amount of time, that differ from one employee to another, from one organization to another, from one country to another. It must be a participative change in which affected people / groups must discuss measures to be adopted and come up with proposals and solutions for effective implementation.

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