FORCES THAT ENHANCE OR REDUCE EMPLOYEE RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

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Abstract: *This paper is part of change management. The extent to which managers succeed to reduce the resistance to change from the part of the affected employees contributes greatly to the achievement of the targeted objectives that follow a change process. This paper aims to present a number of forces located both inside and outside the organization, forces that through their manner of expression may exert a direct influence on the increase or decrease of the opposition's intensity of those affected by the change.*
The identification and analysis of these forces give to the involved managers in coordinating changes the possibility to reduce efficiently and effectively employees resistance to change.

Introduction

The complexity of the world in which we live makes the pace at which changes invade our life to be more accelerated. Everything around us is accelerating. The pace of technical innovations, technological discoveries abound all fields of science and technology, but also in the social area, generating a need for extensive changes in organizations. However, regardless of their knowledge, intelligence or quantity of data acquired over the life by people, they still remain social beings who do not like frequent changes. As AlvinToffler stated in 1970 "the most disturbing thing is that most people, including the educated and refined ones, consider the idea of change so threatening that they try to deny its existence".

Resistance to change

Psychologists (Claes Janssen, 1982, Conner, 1998) explain that human resistance to change is a perfectly natural process. It is human nature to exercise opposition to a process laden with uncertainties and anxieties that generate discomfort and doubts.

Kurt Lewin (1951) explains in a logical manner correlated with the laws of physics that a change does not occur if the factors of a force that generates change are met with similar oncoming factors of a force that generates resistance to change. The force field analysis is the tool proposed by Kurt Lewin that allows us to identify and analyze the two major categories of forces that act as opposites.

An important ingredient that can greatly contribute to the lack or failure of a change is resistance to change. Employees opposition towards manager's proposed changes occur in any change process. We consider that the intensity of this force varies from one change to another, depending on a set of factors.

In the existing literature many experts present that resistance to change can be reduced by using some specific methods or techniques. To do this, first must be assessed the level of commitment to change. Representative methods proposed by specialists to assess commitment to change are:

- Chart commitment proposed by R. Beckhard and R. Harris;
- Curve commitment proposed by Michael Ward.

Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) propose several ways to reduce resistance to change:

- Training and communication;
- Participation and involvement;
- Facilitation and support;
- Negotiation and agreement;
- Manipulation and cooperation;
- Coercion.

The role of the reducing resistance to change methods alongside managers knowledge and skills are essential for a successful implementation. Managers who have the responsibility to coordinate a change must have the ability to choose and then use the appropriate method for each employee in direct correlation with the reasons underlying its opposition. Our belief is that the intensity with which an employee opposes a proposed change is influenced by a number of factors and this intensity can vary from one change to another, from one period to another, from one employee to another, from one organization to another and even from one country to another, depending on the manner of expression of certain forces, deemed by us responsible for increasing or reducing employee resistance towards change.

Forces that enhances or reduces employee resistance to change

The great diversity of forces identified as exercising influence on the acceptance or rejection of the change ideas in an organization has imposed their grouping into categories. In relation to the place from which it generates action, we can speak of internal forces, within the organization, and external forces, specific to the environment in which the organization operates.

We believe that internal forces exert more influence and their better understanding might be achieved if the subsystems that generate them are analyzed (change, employee, manager, organization).

Internal forces

In the vast category of the internal forces we can include:

- Forces that relate with the particularities of the decided change to be implemented;
- Forces connected with employees;
- Forces which are related to the managers that coordinate the change;
- Forces connected with the organization features and processes that take place within it.

Certainly, the greatest influence on the manner in which employees respond to a change is change itself. The manner in which it enhances or reduces employee resistance to change is correlated with several dimensions of change: amplitude (the vertical size of change) that reflects the gap between the old and the new state;

stretch (the horizontal size of change) that reflects the number of employees affected by the change; the frequency with which the change is made; the way in which it keeps or not certain elements of continuity from the past; the way in which the announcement of the change has been prepared; the urgency of the change and the speed of its implementation required by managers; and last but not least, the extent to which the proposed change amends the way in which employees achieve their tasks.

Briefly, the influence of the change on employee resistance to change is also reflected in Table 1.

Tab.1. The influence of the change on the intensity of the resistance to change manifested by employees

	Forces that influence	Resistance to change	
		Small	**Big**
C H A N G E	Amplitude	small	big
	Stretch	local	general
	Frequency	repeated	singular
	Continuity	connected to the past	discontinuous
	Surprise	expected change	unexpected change
	Urgency	small	big
	Implementation speed	small	big
	Changes the way things are done	to a small extent	to a large extent

The manner in which each employee assesses change can generate a bigger or small opposition from employee's part. In this category we can also include as influence factors the following: the nature of employees activity, their trust in the manager who coordinates the change, the extent to which they agree or disagree with company's strategy and policy, qualification and how quickly they can find a similar job in another organization, job security, their potential for leadership, thinking style, age, temperament, their position in the organization's hierarchy as well as their seniority.

Shortly, employee's influence on the intensity of resistance to change is also reflected in Table 2.

Tab.2. Employee influence on the intensity of resistance to change

	Forces that influence	Resistance to change	
		Small	**Big**
E M P L O	Their perception	positive	negative
	The nature of their activities	innovative	routine
	Trust in the change agent	big	small
	Attitude towards company's policy and strategy	agreement	disagreement
	Level of training	big	relatively low
	Possibility of reintegration into the labor market	small	big

Y	Thinking style	creative-innovative	conservative
E	Leadership potential	small	big
E	Job security	small	big
S	Temperament	melancholic	choleric
	Age	young	old
	Position in the organization	important	insignificant
	Seniority	big	small

The intensity of employee opposition may be correlated with certain qualities and skills that the manager responsible for coordinating the changes have. Insofar as they have specific knowledge and apply change management principles, certain characteristics of their personality and management style can help reduce or increase employee resistance to change.

Briefly, manager's influence on the intensity of employee resistance to change is also reflected in Table 3.

Tab.3. Manager's influence on the intensity of employee resistance to change

	Forces that influence	**Resistance to change**	
		Small	**Big**
M	Management style	participatory	authoritative
A	Managerial abilities	excellent	satisfactory
N	Holds and applies knowledge of change management	yes	no
A	Holds and applies specific methods to reduce efficiently resistance to change	yes	no
G	Communication and negotiation abilities	excellent	relatively low
E	The degree of trust inspired to employees	small	big
R	Leadership potential	big	small
I	Position in the organization	top manager	bottom line manager
	Age	maturity	very young
	Experience	big	small
	Personality and charisma	strong	weak
	Innovative creative potential	big	small

Just as there are huge differences between the characteristics of the changes decided to be implemented in organizations, there are also huge differences between the attitudes of employees and managers, differences at the training level, commitment to organizational values and even their own personality. We find that there are a number of specific elements and processes that take place in organizations and they might contribute to a higher or reduced level of resistance to change from employees part.

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We include in this category: organization's size, characteristics of the production processes (mass production, small production or series only), how much delegation of authority is used, characteristics of the organizational structure (a mechanistic structure where there are written policies and procedures to be strictly observed or an organic structure, where the goal is the achievement of the individual objectives), the way in which the payment and motivational systems are designed to work, the quality of the information system, characteristics of the organizational culture and the existence of trade unions in the company.

Shortly, the influence of organization's peculiarities on employee resistance to change is also reflected in Table 4.

Tab.4. The influence of organization's peculiarities on employee resistance to change

	Forces that influence	Resistance to change	
		Small	**Big**
ORGANIZATION	Complexity of the activity	big (high tech)	small (routine activities)
	Degree of centralization	small	big
	Production characteristics	small production and unique products	mass production
	Type of the organizational structure	organic	mechanistic
	The use of motivational systems for employees	yes	no
	A fair payment system aligned with the market labor	yes	no
	The quality of the information system	big	small
	The hierarchy distance	small	big
	Organizational culture	pro change	conservative
	The pace of change in the organization	big	reduced
	Organization's market position	high	low
	The average age of stuff	low	high
	The existence of strong trade unions	No	yes

External forces

Over the years it was found that a set of an increasingly complex and dynamic environmental forces exert a more powerful action over organizations. Even though we are tempted to believe that only internal forces exert an influence on employee's resistance to change, the reality is different. People react to a change also in terms of the specific characteristics of the business environment. We include in the category of external forces the following: the pace of the national economy development, the purchasing power of citizens, the unemployment level in the region, the professional reintegration opportunities, national culture characteristics, the dependence of an area or locality, as well as living standards.

Briefly, the influence of the external forces on the intensity of employee resistance to change is reflected in Table 5.

Tab.5. The influence of the external forces on the intensity of employee resistance to change

	Forces that influence	Resistance to change	
		Small	Big
E X T E R N A L F O R C E S	The pace of the national economy development	small	big
	The purchasing power of citizens	small	big
	The economy is in crisis or recession	yes	no
	The unemployment level in the national economy	big	small
	Opportunities to change job	small	big
	Retraining opportunities	small	big
	Social instability	big	small
	National culture	pro change	conservative
	Dependence on a certain area	big	small
	The existence of some strategies and policies to promote the entrepreneurial phenomenon	no	yes
	Banking and insurance	weak	strong
	Wage dependence	high	low
	Standard of living	reduced	acceptable

Conclusions:
Reducing resistance to change is a well defined and crucial phase in a process of change implementation in organizations. Successfully reducing employee's resistance to change creates preconditions for achieving a greater measure of objectives. For a successful completion of the reducing resistance to change phase important resources are needed. These resources are: necessary expertise in the field of change management, action coordination by competent change agents, time resources that will allow employees to accept the change as well as financial resources, necessary for motivating the affected by the change employees. By knowing the forces that can increase or reduce employees strength of opposition to the new ideas for change, managers can better coordinate the process, reducing the resources required to achieve the necessary commitment from those affected by the change, so that the implemented change is not reversible.

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