

EMPLOYEE STRESS PHASES ASSOCIATED WITH CHANGE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

This paper suggests reduction of Resistance to Zero within employees in any organization, provided the fact that change is brought with planning and implemented using certain leadership characteristics. Resistance does not occur if employees are properly motivated and are prepared for change. Authors have used Beckhard Harris Change model to explain the co-relation between change factors and resistance ($D \times V \times F = R$). On the other hand if the direction of change is not aligned with organizational goals, the management and staff find themselves disengaged, causing stress within the organization. This paper focuses on the factors and phases of stress which employees have to go through, in situations where change management does not proceed through proper leadership and employee engagement. The study uses Change curve Model to explain the phases of stress caused by change and associated employee reactions.

Key words: Change management, employee stress, change curve, resistance.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Changing environment at workplace is one of the most common reasons of stress, among management as well as the staff members. There are immediate and natural responses that employees exhibit if the change is not implemented in cooperation with employees. Although when management and staff share same goals, thinking mechanism and work with team alliance the process becomes smooth and fruit full. Change in one or more of the organizational factors; structure, culture, leadership, job demands or physical conditions cause workforce to resist change and cause stress. Stress causes absenteeism, high turnover, work family conflicts, work overload decreased productivity low morale and job dissatisfaction. The paper thus tries to explain the impact of successful change implementation and factors which assist the process. It also explains employee reactions and stress factors in case of failure.

Organizations today are moving towards a more flat and less bureaucratic organizational structures to cope with rapidly changing work requirements. They believe in empowering employees and team oriented cultures and face rapid change in work designs and leadership. Along with the growing competition managing these changes at workplace is one of the major concerns of every organization that wish to survive. Change is a never ending process and organizations keep on changing with time. Employees have to learn and adopt things to survive and make pace with the external environment. This makes change management one of the most important topics for organizations.

Organizational change can be differentiated into types depending upon the nature of change. **Natural evolutionary changes** occur in an organization when in adapts to the environmental changes, these changes keep taking place and are often unannounced, it refers to the learning process that employees go through while competing with the internal and external environment. When the managers realize that natural changes are not heading in the desired direction and are not bringing fruitful results change process needs to be planned and managed. **Planned and Managed change** implementation not works in specific directions but also focuses in stabilizing the change process. [1]

1. IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

The process of implementing change is smooth if the objectives of the senior management and the employees are similar. Employees feel more committed to organization and believe

that whatever change is going to be implemented would bring equal benefits to their career and the organization. Employees if given chance to take part in strategic change implementation results in better decision quality, affective change responses and successful change implementation.[2] As a result of this participation in strategic change implementation employees gain a strong feeling of goal achievement, organizational commitment and the resistance factor is nullified. On the contrary in some cases if there is a gap between the two, they may resist to the change which causes stress for both the staff as well as the management. This communication gap makes employees feel disconnected and worried because of the change.

To make the change process easy and convenient managing and planning change process holds a vital role. This can reduce resistance and make change implementation process smooth. Beckhard Harris Change model can well explain the relation of resistance with three important change factors; where C (Planned Change) D (Desire to change Status Quo) V (Vision) F (First Step) and R (Resistance).

$$C = D \times V \times F = R$$

The model explains that to overcome the resistance which occurs during change process employee's first need to realize and show willingness to face the change and should have a wish to bring positive results. When the need for change is identified a change leader is needed who has the vision to implement and foresee the effects and situation. In these early phases of change implementation a good leadership can play a vital role in helping through the transformation phase. If the leadership is positive it creates a positive empowering climate which makes the transition easy. A positive transformational Leadership helps in controlling employee turnover organizational stress during change implementation and demoralizing climates [3]. Besides being a charismatic change agent the concept of ethical leadership also holds immense importance. An ethical leader creates an environment of trust and harmony during the change process. Employees feel more committed towards the organization when they realize that their leader is making ethical choices and follow him through the toughest way if he is trustworthy [4]. Not only positive leadership play important role in transition, but positive employee also play a significant role. Positive Psychological capital and positive emotions can lead to successful implication of change [5]. After having the desire to change and a visionary Employee resistance is definitely one of the biggest threats when implementing change.

Change process fails due to low motivational among employees, these employees when feel left out and disengaged from the change process. Low level of motivation leads to resistance and dejection to accept change.

A hypothetical correlation was run to see the relation between desistance and motivation.

2. RESISTANCE VS MOTIVATION

The strength of the linear association between two variables is quantified by the *correlation coefficient*.

Given a set of observations $(x_1, y_1), (x_2, y_2), \dots, (x_n, y_n)$, the formula for computing the correlation coefficient is given by :

$$r = \frac{1}{n-1} \sum \left(\frac{x - \bar{x}}{s_x} \right) \left(\frac{y - \bar{y}}{s_y} \right)$$

The correlation coefficient always takes a value between -1 and 1, with 1 or -1 indicating perfect correlation (all points would lay along a straight line in this case). A positive correlation indicates a positive association between the variables (increasing values in one variable correspond to increasing values in the other variable), while a negative correlation indicates a negative association between the variables (increasing values is one variable correspond to decreasing values in the other variable). A correlation value close to 0 indicates no association between the variables.

M = Motivation (M taking along X-axis's because it is independent quantity)

R= Resistance (R taking along Y-axis's because it is dependent quantity)

Values of M and R are in percentage

No of obsv	M	M-M	M ²	R	R-R	R ²
1	5	-10.4	25	20	-9	400
2	12	-3.4	144	30	-1	900
3	15	-.04	225	30	-1	900
4	20	+4.6	400	35	+4	1225
5	25	+9.6	625	40	+9	1600

TOTAL	77	0	1419	155	2	5025
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Mean of M = $\sum M/n$

Mean of R = $\sum R/n$

$\sum M$ is sum of all values of M

$\sum R$ is sum of all values of R

N total no of observations

N total no of observations

Mean of M=15.4

Mean of R=31

$$S_M = \sqrt{\{(\sum M^2/n - 1) - (\sum M/n - 1)^2\}}$$

$$= 18.31$$

$$S_R = \sqrt{\{(\sum R^2/n - 1) - (\sum R/n - 1)^2\}}$$

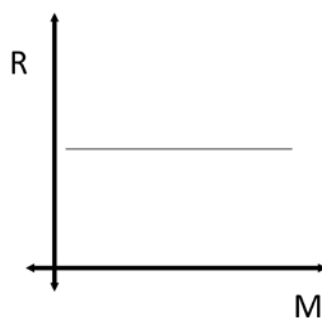
$$= 33.89$$

$$r = \frac{1}{n-1} \sum \left(\frac{x - \bar{x}}{s_x} \right) \left(\frac{y - \bar{y}}{s_y} \right)$$

$$= 0$$

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No correlation: If there is no linear correlation or a weak linear correlation, r is close to 0. A value near zero means that there is a random, nonlinear relationship between the two variables



The correlation shows that if resistance level is higher than motivational factors then there is no change accrues.

3. MANAGING PEOPLE SIDE OF CHANGE

The fact is that organizations don't just change because of new systems, processes or new organization structures. They change because the people within the organization adapt and change too. Only when the people within it have made their own personal transitions can an organization truly reap the benefits of change. The challenge in this case is not only to get the systems, process and structures right, but also to help and support people through these individual transitions. The shift can sometimes be intensely traumatic, and involve loss of power and prestige and even employment. Fear and tension created during the shift cause individuals to resist and reject the idea of change in every possible way. It is the responsibility of the management in such a situation to guide and prepare their employees for the change and do every possible thing to make the transition easy. Leadership plays a very important role during change implementation.

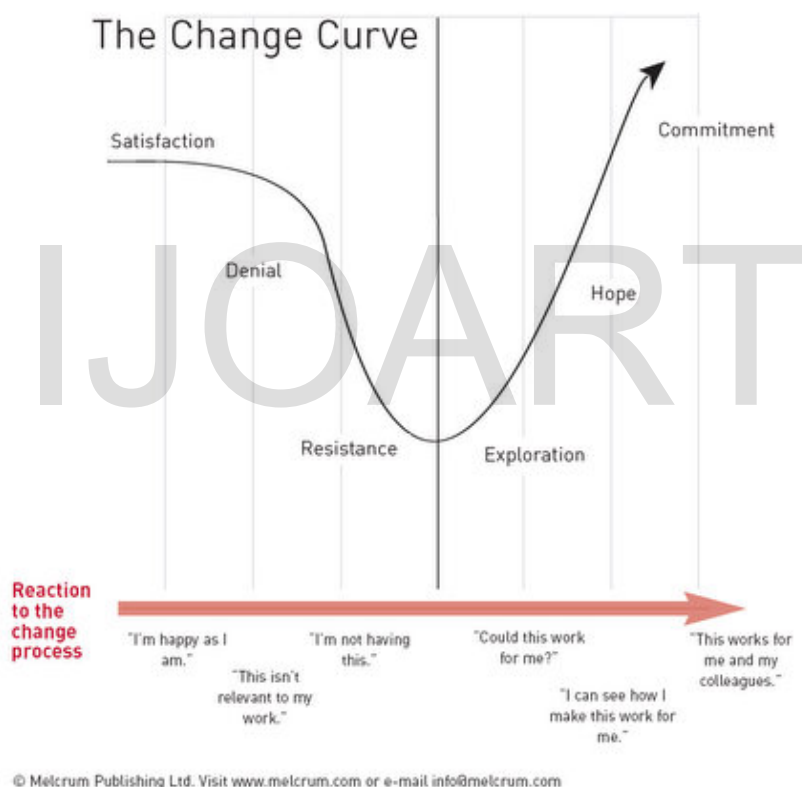
Whenever the work force encounters change it cause stress and tension among them. Studies have revealed that occupational stress and organizational change have a strong association and they affect Organizational behavior and Commitment of the employees. Non-supportive internal environment and increased workloads associated with change stress employees the most [6]. People who are more reluctant to accept change have higher level of stress and they fear the possibility of failing to cope with the new situation. [7] According to Rafferty and Griffin There are some salient aspects that influence an individual's response to change. Individuals have prior experiences which shape their response to organizational change. They explain that there are three change characteristics which affect the process of change and determine how smoothly it would occur. These characteristics are the frequency of the change, the ultimate impact of the change and how the change is being planned. The cross-sectional study explained that the three change perceptions were strongly interrelated. The ultimate goal is to implement change successfully and reduce stress associated with it. It also suggested that the change process can be made easy by implementing it in a systematic way. [8]

Individuals respond differently to change beside the three salient features there are individual (Self esteem, optimism and self control) and contextual factors (information received about the change, self efficacy for coping with change, and participation in decision making process). Individuals high on the mentioned personality traits accepted change readily while those who are low tend to quit jobs easily and are associated with job irritation and dissatisfaction. [9] Acceptability to organizational change is also related to the commitment

and motivation of the employee towards the job and their tasks. If the motivation and commitment is high the individual is may accept the change happily [10]. Employees when feel that they are valued and cared about and the management is concerned about them they feel more committed and comfortable. This reduces and organizational role stress leading to no resistance during change. [11]

4. THE CHANGE CURVE

The Change Curve is a popular and powerful model used to understand the stages of personal transition and organizational change. It can help in location where the individuals stand in particular change process and how to manage and pull them out of it.

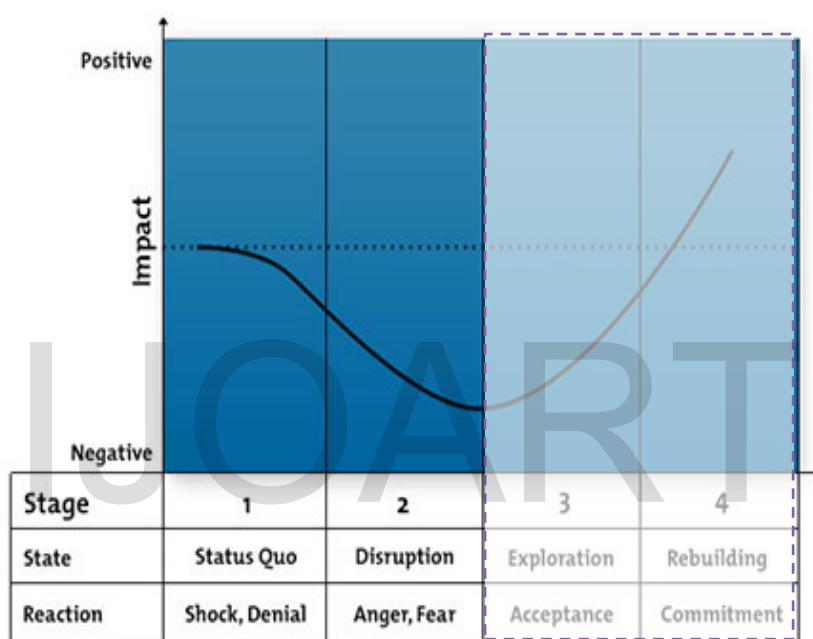


The Change Curve model describes the four stages employees go through as they adjust to change. When a change is first introduced, individual's initial reaction may be shock or denial, as they react to the challenge to the status quo. Once the reality of the change starts to hit, individuals tend to react negatively; they may fear the impact; feel angry; and actively resist or protest against the changes. A few wrongly fear the negative consequences of change, while others correctly identify real threats to their position. As a result, the

organization experiences disruption which, if not carefully managed, can quickly twist into chaos.

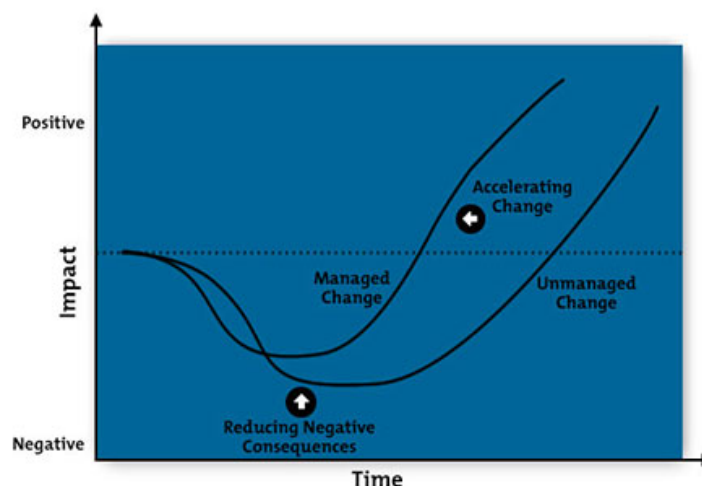
For as long as people resist the change and remain at stage 2 of the Change Curve, the change will be unsuccessful, at least for the people who react with anger and resistance. This is a stressful and unpleasant stage. For everyone, it is much healthier to move to stage 3 of the Change Curve, where pessimism and resistance give way to some optimism and acceptance.

FIGURE 1 – THE CHANGE CURVE



Here the figure explains an individual’s reaction through each phase. Since the basic aim of the study is to identify how an employee feels when he hears about change in his organization. Lack of proper communication and explanation of expected outcomes of change can lead to shock and denial in the very first stage. Later the feeling further grows into anger and fear which can cause disruption in stage two. Only the first two stages are considered under this study as it focuses on the reactions caused by stress. Able leadership in these stages can help minimizing the negative impact of the change and help people adapts more quickly to it. The aim of the leader here is to make the curve shallower and narrower.

Figure 2 – Using the Change Curve



The two graphs further explain the difference between successfully handled change management and the other one depicting failure of the process. It shows that a well managed change implementation has a shallower and narrower graph as compared to one that has failed.

5. COPING WITH CHANGE

5.1 Stage 1

People are in shock or in denial in this stage. Even if the change has been well planned and they understand what is happening, they need to take time to adjust. Providing them with information, understanding of what is happening, and help them to cope with it can moderate the feeling of shock and denial hence reducing the resistance. This is a critical stage for communication. Continuous communication can help a lot. Although it has to be kept in mind that they should not be overloaded as they'll only be able to take in a limited amount of information at a time.

5.2 Stage 2

At this stage employee's start reacting to the change, they feel concerned, angry, resentful or frightened and they may resist the change actively or passively. For the organization, this stage is the "danger zone." If this stage is badly managed, the organization may descend into crisis or chaos. So this stage needs careful planning and preparation. For leaders and change managers it is important that they address these feeling early with clear communication and

support and by taking action to minimize and mitigate the problems that people will experience.

5.3 Stage 3

This is the turning point for individuals and for the organization. Once you turn the corner to stage 3, the organization starts to come out of the danger zone. This is the point where employees start exploring the pros and cons of the change implemented and calculate how they can reap maximum benefit out of it. Organizations in more than 70 % cases fail to reach this stage and have to fail severe crisis in stage one and two.

Conclusion

The concern of successful change implementation can be divided into three steps; plan, communicate and execute. Change implementation brings fruitful results when the management put in best of their efforts to console and facilitates employees through the change process. Following the three steps properly can bring out the best results. This paper draws a brief discussion on how each of these steps can help through the process. **Planning** is the most critical step; and most of the management's attention is concentrated here. Successful planning help clearly defines the objectives of the real problem driving the change. Once the real problem is discovered it then helps in find the best possible solution. Planning during change is a continuous process and it takes many turns as the reactions and responses of individuals change.

The key to success in the process is to provide honest, constant and relevant **communication** between the change team members, upwards to senior executives and outwards to those who are affected by the change. This communication must take place in every step of the change process for the initiative to be successful. Since most of the individuals resist change primarily due to the fear of the unknown, making special and concerted efforts to combat this through every form of organizational communication. Most importantly, all questions should be answered immediately and in an honest and timely fashion.

Last but not the least, planning and communication alone don't serve the cause if not properly executed. **Execution** must be according to the plan and best leader should be assigned to lead the change. It is not only the plan that works out in the end but who leads the mob and how is

another important aspect. If things go well and according to the plan the end result will not be an ill-planned innovative rollout, but a rollout that encompasses the best of change management and, most importantly, accomplishes its intended goals.

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