

Chapter 1

Change Management Revised

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces three theses: Firstly, that current change management models revolve around the question how predefined change intentions can be effectively implemented. Secondly, that this current scope of change management neglects the fact that a considerable number of change management initiatives in organizations are either unnecessary or not feasible or both. Thirdly, that the scope of change management has to be extended towards selecting effective and feasible change initiatives. These three theses call for an alternative scope statement for change management as well as for a revised model of change management. Both aspects of the revised notion of change management will be explicated in the chapter to follow, corroborated by a case study of a religious congregation.

REVISING THE SCOPE OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT

One of the widespread myths about change management is that between 60% to 90% of all change management initiatives fail (Hammer & Champy, 1993; Beer & Nohria, 2000; Kotter, 2008; Senturia, Flees, & Maceda, 2008; Meany & Pung, 2008; Blanchard, 2010; Burnes, 2009; Hughes, 2010). Despite the shortcomings of such percentages, which is due to the fact that organizational outcomes are difficult to quantify and highly dependent on individual perceptions, they express a common observation: i.e. that a most change management initiatives involve a great deal of what the school of Lean Management calls “waste” (Womack & Jones, 1996).

Researchers have also proposed reasons for this finding (Kotter, 1995; Beer & Nohria, 2000; Meany & Pung, 2008; Keller & Aiken, 2009; Song, 2009; Burnes, 2009; Blanchard, 2010; Keller, Meany, & Pung, 2010; Kotter, 2012):

- A lack of a clearly defined project structure for the change initiative,
- A lack of top management engagement regarding the change,
- A lack of clear visions and goals regarding the intended outcomes and effects,
- A lack of wholehearted buy-in of the respective stakeholders, especially associates,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-9533-7.ch001

- A lack of proper and continuous communication regarding the status and the results of the change initiative,
- A lack of appropriate incentives for the stakeholders prompting them to support the initiative,
- A lack of flexibility to change the course when it is not appropriate to the organization,
- A lack of leadership transformation as a core agent for successful change.

Based on these insights, a number of models have been proposed in view of how to manage planned organizational changes (Lewin, 1951; Kotter, 1995; Beer & Nohria, 2000; Burnes, 2009; Blanchard, 2010; Kotter, 2012). For the predominant part, such models follow Kurt Lewin's (1951) three steps of change in social systems: to begin with, the need for change has to be established, e.g. by revealing and broaching the different social forces with their divergent intentions ("unfreezing"). Secondly, after the social system has been prepared for change, new practices can be tested and evaluated ("change"). The so elaborated beneficial and feasible outcomes can then be anchored in the behavior and structures of a social system ("refreezing").

Not discussing the fact that the various change management models differ in their underlying assumptions regarding reasons for and mechanisms of change as well as in approaches to managing planned organizational changes (Burnes, 2009; Hughes, 2010; Cameron & Green, 2012), the existing models of organizational change management have one underlying assumption in common: that the necessity and direction of organizational change are given and that the scope of change management consists in its implementation. Hence, change management, in the last 60 years, has been established as a social technology which transforms predefined intentions into behaviors, structures and programs of social systems.

This notion contrasts with our observations, that a considerable number of change initiatives is to be questioned in terms of the content. Numerous reorganizational initiatives originate in a manager's intent to leave his or her footprint. Other initiatives are predominantly based on management fashions introduced by new process models, new leadership models, new key performance indicators or new perspectives on strategies and are "knee-jerkedly" implemented in the organization without reflecting the need for change. A third contingent of change initiatives might be beneficial, but they simply overburden an organization with scarce resources in which already several other change initiatives are under way, initiatives which already take up all resources available. These observations might suggest further reasons why a majority of change management initiatives fails, reasons which have not yet been taken into consideration.

This chapter has, therefore, three goals:

1. To question the notion that the scope of change management is restricted to having predefined purposes implemented. Change management should rather be conceptualized as a model challenging its own subject in order to focus the organization on needful and feasible changes. Traditionally this has been the task of strategic management. However, the separation between strategic management and change management impede the leverage of the organization's intellectual capital.
2. To report a case study in which exactly this notion has been implemented by carefully evaluating and selecting the change initiatives which are both effective and feasible.
3. To generalize the experiences of the case study to a revised change management model which is able to balance the need for change with the need for focusing the organization.

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