

Implementing Change

In this recording we summarise the content of chapter 25 Implementing Change.

Studying this chapter should help you understand the role of leaders, managers and change agents in the change process; critically compare and contrast the planned and emergent approaches to implementing change; review the application of organization development (OD) theory to implement change within organizations; discuss typical difficulties associated with implementing change; .

Introducing the chapter, the authors start with 1. Understanding the triggers that lead people to think changes are needed, and what happens when managers try to make changes, is essential given the volatile world that we live in, Senior and Swailes (2010). Change is about replacement – one system for another, one process for another, one strategy or mission for another. In the previous chapter we discussed what is meant by change and distinguished types of change such as radical (transformational) and less major change (continuous improvement, transactional). Generally, change scholars and practitioners associate ‘planned’ approaches with radical change and ‘emergent’ approaches with less major change. Planned approaches are more likely to make use of the change models, tools and techniques discussed thus far.

2. We have organised this chapter around two dominant approaches to change implementation: the planned and the emergent. There are many prescriptions for the planned approach and we start by describing a generic change process. Many change management scholars suggest the planned approach to change is closely associated with the practice of organisational development, Carnall (2007). Despite this approach originating during the middle of the 20th century it has evolved to present an integrated framework of theories and practices capable of solving or helping to solve most of the important problems confronting the human side of organisations. OD represents an enormously influential mode of thinking about and practice in the change management field; it is about planned change, getting individuals, teams and organisations to function better. We therefore describe this approach immediately after describing the generic change process. Whilst linear models and plans have the merit of simplicity they are not without criticism. Recognising criticisms of the planned approach (that it is impossible to plan in a constantly changing world), in the final part of this chapter we briefly describe emergent approaches to change.

3. This chapter is essentially about the action side of change – making it happen. Williams, Woodward and Dobson (2002) raise the following practical questions relating to the implementation of change: Do we need external consultants for the implementation process? How do we motivate people to implement change? What kinds of leadership are best when implementing change? How can we help staff cope with the stress of change? And how do we get individuals to adopt mental sets compatible with the changes being introduced? In addition we might have further questions such as: should change be a top down or bottom-up approach, planned or emergent? What tools and techniques may be appropriate? We will consider a number of these questions throughout this chapter..

The key concepts discussed within this chapter are:

Change agent - any person seeking to promote, further, support, sponsor, initiate, implement or help to deliver change within the organization; Organisation Development - A systematic process aimed at improving organisational effectiveness and adaptiveness on the basis of behavioural science knowledge; typical stages in an OD programme include analysis, diagnosis, action plans and review, an external third party assists the process. (See also Change Agent.); .

Other terms discussed include:

Change implementers; Coalition building; Process consultation; Visioning; .

Summarising and concluding, the author(s) make the following comments - 24. We have described two dominant approaches to change: planned and emergent. With foundations laid by Kurt Lewin the planned approach, reflected in the organisation and development movement in particular,

dominated management for much of the 20th century. However, planned change has faced increasing levels of criticism due to the changing organisational context i.e. from predictable to turbulent environments. In such environments, change must be a continuous process and in many cases it is difficult to determine what must be done and then create a sophisticated plan to achieve it. The emergent approach tends to see changes driven from the bottom up rather than from the top down and stresses change as an open-ended and continuous process of adaptation to changing conditions and circumstances.

25. Diagnosis (Through change models), problem information (from surveys, observations and data analysis), gap analysis and visioning are used to motivate and determine what to change. Having established the need for change, change initiators then consider whether the organisation is in fact ready for change. Lewin concluded that the change process needs to follow a three-step procedure: unfreezing, moving and refreezing. Many change agents use force-field analysis as an analytical tool to understand the dynamics of change. It is used in conjunction with stakeholder analysis.

26. Various people are responsible for making change happen; leaders need to be persuasive and political and overcome resistance. They must monitor the environment, identify and establish the need for change and provide clear direction for organisational change effort. They must also communicate that need and initiate activities. Managers can identify opportunities, promote ethical behaviour, and develop capabilities within the organisation in order to keep it aligned with its environment. The success of implementing change is associated with those who facilitate the change process. Change leaders need to understand why people react to change as they do - they should consider those on the receiving end. Change recipients may be concerned about how the change will impact upon their relationships with others (the people they currently work with), their ability to do what is being asked of them and their future needs..

We have now reached the end of the chapter 'Implementing Change'.

There are a number of references for this chapter where further reading opportunities are identified for you.