



The Changing Face of Change Management by Ginny Jones, APR

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Change Management: Few terms can elicit the same strong visceral response than this disparate combination of words so aptly does. While organizations don't dispute the need for large-scale workplace transformation to compete in the global marketplace, the ways and means applied to achieve results (i.e., increase efficiencies, reduce costs and enhance market share) have often had the opposite effect.

In fact, according to the *Harvard Business Review*, "70% off all corporate change initiatives fail." Perhaps it's those alarming results that have spurred academics and business leaders to change how they view change itself.

Traditionalists see change as episodic and rare, involving a movement from one static state to a new static state. The more "organic" and increasingly espoused assumption is that change is a continuous and natural state of being. While many embrace the second view and recognize the need for a workforce that is constantly "adaptive" to external forces, many of their prescriptions for action are still based on the first definition.

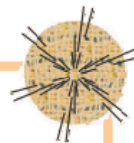
Context for Change

By borrowing from other disciplines like psychology, anthropology, sociology and organizational design, experts on change are seeking fundamental answers about the very nature of change within organizations. Rather than focus on *creating a plan to support an initiative*, the most important task facing leaders today is to provide a *context for change* that will redirect people's beliefs and assumptions about change so that they can become active, vital participants in the changes around them.

To ensure change programs are deeply and fully integrated across the organization, management must reconfigure the existing people, structures, culture, processes and networks while regulating the inevitable distress that adaptive work generates. Attention is required to pinpoint just how a company's value systems or methods of collaboration must change to facilitate change management. By managing emotional connections, which are essential for successful transformation but have traditionally been suppressed or banned from the workplace, management can empower workers to seek solutions in the face of potential conflict.

The Change Dynamic: Internal Negotiations

This shift calls for managers to think of change in terms of overseeing a "dynamic", in which those responsible for leading the change effort and those who are expected to implement the new strategies can revise the mutual obligations and commitments (both stated and implied, that exist between employees and the company). These "*internal negotiations*," which are a critical component of any change effort, are currently **rife with emotion, stress and battles for control**. Simply put, negotiation calls for two or more parties to resolve their divergent goals by redefining the terms of their interdependence. This **recognition of mutual power bases (albeit interdependent) signals a willingness amongst enlightened executives to perceive workers as essential partners whose enduring motivation is key**.



Intrinsic Motivation

To power motivation, leading companies are replacing outdated extrinsic rewards (e.g., salaries, titles, bonuses, promotions and other perks) with intrinsic ones (e.g., stimulating work, new skill acquisition, satisfying team work, enriching collaborations, better work/life balance practices, etc.). These rewards can excite and stretch individuals while encouraging them to put their passions in the service of business objectives.

Far more democratic than its predecessor, the transformational organization identifies the factors that produce sustained change, including **an abiding trust in the leadership, a willingness to share business imperatives and lots of early (pre-implementation stage) involvement in decisions that directly affect the small work group.**

A Significant Role for Communicators

All of these developments are welcome news for communications practitioners who prefer a systemic approach rather than a traditional top-down role. In fact, for those who like nothing better than to roll up their sleeves and help others reach solutions, change management may be just the “stretch” needed to stay motivated. The communicator’s unique ability to help others redefine roles and responsibilities, clarify expectations and communicate outcomes has never been more valued than in today’s modern workplace. Further reading and training in such emerging areas as conflict resolution, organizational development, team-work, leadership approaches, governance and corporate culture will assist the practitioner in developing his or her own context for change.

Key Changes in Change Management

- ◆ An *organic* approach towards change replacing the traditionalist’s view.
 - ◆ **Business leaders to provide the *context for change*.**
- ◆ Greater cultural support to *regulate* the inevitable distress that adaptive work generates.
 - ◆ Organizational value systems and methods of collaboration to be updated.
- ◆ Personal beliefs and assumptions about change to evolve so we can become *active participants*.
- ◆ New recognition of importance of maintaining healthy *emotional connections*.
 - ◆ Improved conflict resolution skills to support ongoing *internal negotiations*.
 - ◆ Enduring employee motivation tied to *intrinsic rewards*.
- ◆ The communications practitioner well positioned to play a *significant* role in large-scale workplace transformation.