# The hard side of change management

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There are many contributory factors to the success of any business and an organisation's ability to manage change is one of the critical factors. Change is ever-present, ever constant hence the need to understand how it impacts the business as a whole. Advancements in technology, globalisation, complex business environment and the changing needs of stakeholders are all push factors for organisations reviewing their organisations' structures and procedures to have a competitive edge over competitors. Companies are constantly applying organisational change programmes to reduce operating costs, improve performance and enhance effectiveness. Many organizations come up with systems to try and make sure that change is successful however a process can be initiated but the outcomes cannot be guaranteed.

With the negative statistical reports on the success of change management and the assumption that over half of change initiatives fail it is disheartening to try and manage change. The application of change involves many difficulties and setbacks in itself, although the implementation of change improves the productivity of other organisations (Abas and Yaacoob, 2006). Contrary to this, the existing literature contains many reports of change management failing (Mourier and Smith, 2001; Miller, 2002; Singels et al., 2001). During some studies, some researchers found organisational change management failure rate of between 50% and 70% (Balogun and Hailey, 2004; Raps, 2004; Sturdy and Grey, 2003). Moreover, some authors reported a failure rate of 80% or more of change management programmes (Kearney, 1992; Witcher, 1993; Zairi et al., 1994).

The failure of change management seems more likely. For instance, Schaffer and Thompson (1992), in a study of 300 electronics companies in the USA, found that 63% of them failed in their change programmes. Only 10% of those change programs were successful. According to Sturdy and Grey (2003), although 90% of organisations applied changes, 66% of them were not successful in achieving their objectives. Mourier and Smith (2001) in a study of 210 American manufacturing and service organisations that implemented various change programmes, results show a 25% success rate. Another study on Fortune 100 companies that initiated change programmes between 1980 and 1995, results that only 30% of them realised an improvement in their performance (Pascale et al., 1997).

What really causes change management programmes or initiatives to fail? Failure of change management is attributed to insufficient education and training, employees' apathy, inadequate management support, poor leadership, inappropriate organisational culture, inadequate resources, poor and ineffective communication, lack of a plan for change, lack of employees involvement, inappropriate planning, insufficient customer focus, and lack of a robust monitoring and measurement system. Change management is not a one size fits all kind of system, its functionality and need are very varied from organization to organization hence it is pivotal to plan for any change before it is implemented. It is also crucial to ensure that resistance to change is addressed and employees are given assurance on the security for their jobs.

Change management is undeniably essential in the success of any organisation. Ensuring that it is carried out effectively and needs to be a core competence of all managers and not something that they can pass off to others. Change programme implementation and its impact depend on the ability of managers to adopt and adapt the change programme model specific to their own organisations. A well-designed adapted and well-implemented change programme helps managers achieve desired results. Identification of those factors that contribute to change success or failure enables change leaders to develop effective strategies for enhancing the chances of achieving desired outcomes. Employees who understand the change effort also are more likely to be less resistant to change. Hence it is crucial to make sure that the organisation as a whole is well equipped and prepared for the change process.

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