

CHANGE MANAGEMENT: A BIOLOGICAL APPROACH



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Abstract:

Changes have become an inevitable aspect of organizational dynamics and are affecting individuals on a day-to-day basis. Change management from an Individual perspective is a major transition process, which might challenge one's beliefs and values. If not handled properly individuals who resist change can actually cripple an organization. As organizations build to last must be build to change similarly individual's build to last in organizational context must be build to change. How ever this is an ideal situation where the individuals are anticipated to change at the same pace as the organization. In reality each individual has to go through the several phases before one accepts and acclimatizes to the change(s) and the time involved in traversing these phases varies from individual to individual. Hence careful planning, involving people at all levels of the organization in the change management process, training, mentoring & counseling the individuals, giving certain sort of assurance, re-assurance to the individuals and addressing vivid mix of factors involved in this change management dynamics will assist the organizations to implement changes swiftly and enables them to win the every day battle called "struggle for existence and survival of the fittest". Most of the well-planned change management strategies fail at the execution phase because of the resistance offered by the individuals. Hence it is crucial for the organizations to understand what makes people tick, and for this organizations need to understand why people, in general, resist changes and how this can be surpassed.

The focus in this paper is to present the basic phases of individual's response to the changes and the human anatomical model which actually guides an individual through the change management process.

Introduction:

Accomplishing the desired organizational goals, in the context of environmental contingencies and turbulence, takes time. This axiom is based on the experience of those organizations that have successfully embarked and indoctrinated the change management process into their corporate cultures. Change Management from an individual perspective is a major transition process, which might challenge the beliefs and values of an individual.

Individual Change Management is the management of change from the perspective of that individual who ultimately must implement the change. The focus here is to present the human anatomical model which actually guides an individual through the change management process. One of the principal concerns is the communication, training and mentoring that is required to inform, guide and assist individuals in understanding each one's role and the decisions that each one must make in the change process.

In today's economy, the only constant is change and the challenges imposed by these changes. Changes happen continuously, and often at a dazzling pace. Since changes have become an inevitable part of organizational dynamics, individuals who resist change can actually cripple an organization. Hence, organizations built to last must be built to change.

Organizations need to swiftly respond to changes in the environment in order to ensure their survival, stability and steady growth. For organizations to respond quickly, the employees of the organization should readily embark on the required changes to achieve the desired results. The biggest challenge for any organization is to get its employees full support in implementing the required changes in order to face ever-growing global competition. Most of the Change Management strategies collapse at the implementation stage because of the resistance offered by the employees. In order to embark on a smooth Change Management process, organizations need to understand what makes people tick, and for this they need to understand why people, in general, resist changes and how this can be surpassed.

Individual's response to change(s)

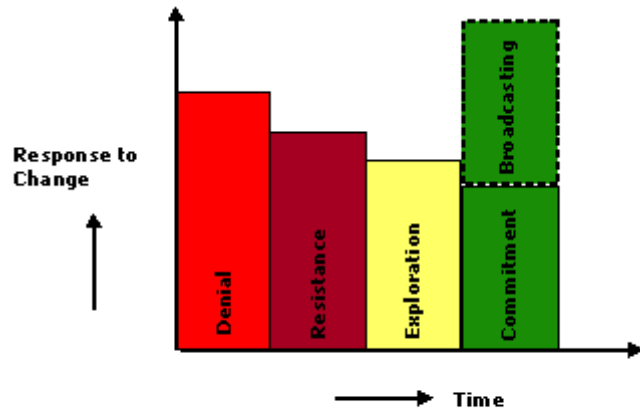
In order to accept and adjust to change, every individual needs to pass through the following basic stages:

Denial phase: Individuals refuse to acknowledge that change is important and necessary.

Resistance phase: Individuals' active/inactive opposition to change.

Exploration phase: Individuals tend to explore the benefits of the change(s).

Commitment and **Broadcasting** phase: Individuals fully embark on to the change(s) and even might not hesitate to broadcast the benefits of the change(s).



The basic four phases of human response to Change (s)

Fig 1.0 – Individual's response to Change

Most individuals have to go through these stages as they seek to rationalize what they are being required to do. All this takes **'time'** and there are no short-cuts in this process. Individuals need to be convinced of the benefits of going through the change(s) again and again.

Allan & John (2001, 82-84)

Anatomy of Individual in the Organizational and Environmental Context

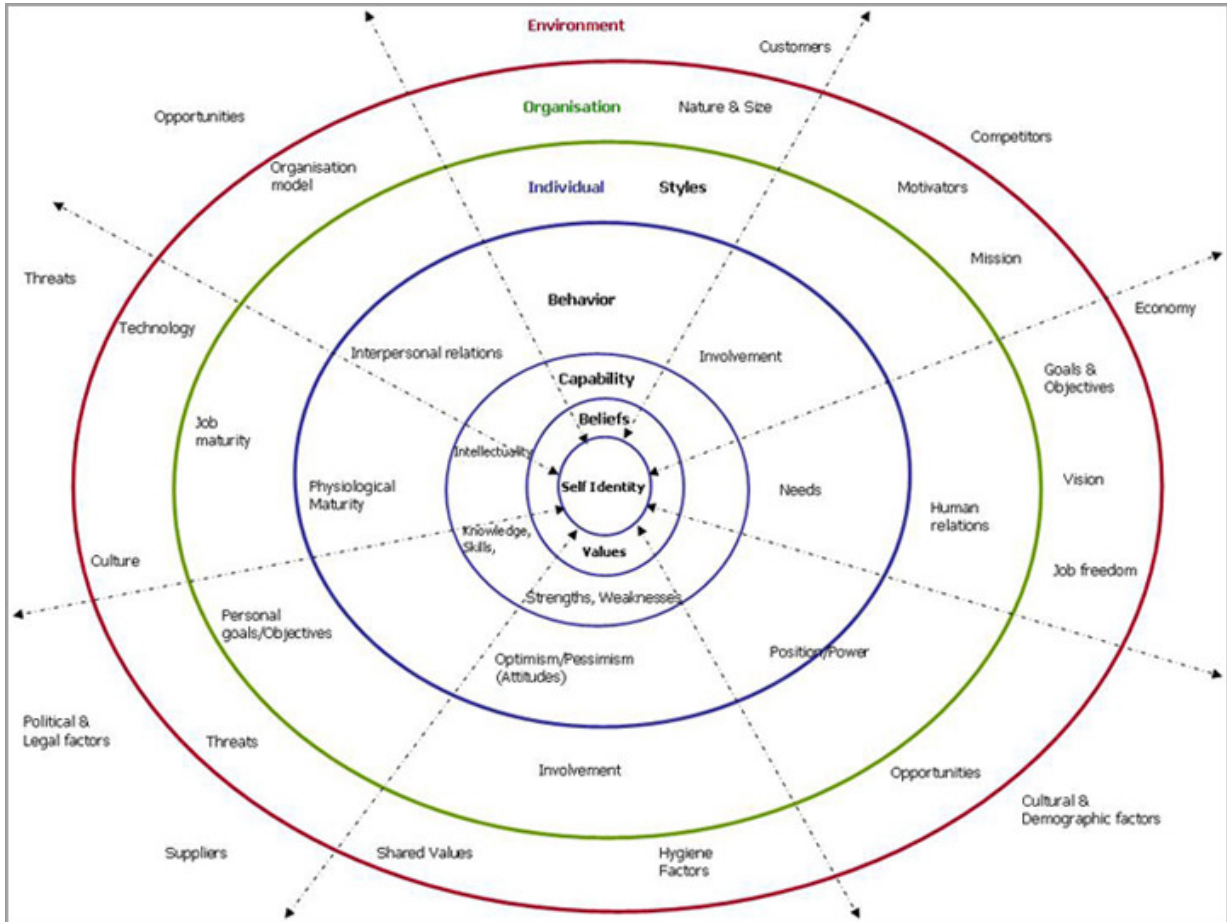


Fig 2.0 – Human Anatomy in the organizational and environmental context

Human Anatomy

Self Identity:

Self Identity, the core of every individual, is an absolute term and is more of a perception.

Beliefs / Values:

Individual beliefs and values make all the difference. The way an individual looks at him/herself is different from what others consider him/her to be.

Self-identity, beliefs and values form the core of an individual (opinion of one's self).

Capability: Includes an individual's intellectuality, knowledge, skills, strengths, weaknesses, etc.

Behavior: Is influenced by the individual's physical and mental state which is, in turn, influenced by the individual needs, interpersonal relations, involvement, physical maturity, psychological maturity, job maturity, emotional intelligence, etc.

Style: The self-identity, beliefs, values, capabilities acting from within an individual governs his/her behavior, which determines their particular style. The individual's style is also influenced by the organizational and environmental factors acting upon them externally.

Allan & John (2001, 104-106)

Organizational Anatomy

The following organizational factors tremendously influence the individual's behavior within the organizational context:

- Nature and Size
- Structure
- Strategy
- System
- Staff
- Technology (Skills)
- Style
- Shared values
- Culture, mission, vision and goals
- Job freedom, growth perspective
- Career development opportunities

Organizational behavior, in its environment, is influenced by the 7S framework (Structure, Strategy, Systems, Shared Values, Staff, Style and Skills) and other factors acting from within the organization and the environmental factors acting on organizations externally.

Environmental Anatomy

Political, economical, socio-cultural, technological and legal are some of the environmental factors that influence the behavior of an organization in its field/industry. This, in turn, affects the individual's behavior in an organization.

Common reasons for resistance

Individuals' inherent aversion to change
Surprise and uncertainty factor
Fear of failure factor
Peer pressure factor
Ambiance of mistrust factor
Persona conflicts factor
Unable to see the benefits – 'what's-in-it-for-me?' factor
Loss of status quo and/or job security
Upheaval of corporate norms and/or team relationships.

Ground Rules for Successful Change Management

Pre-Change Implementation meetings to manage anticipated or expected behavioral distortion
Multi-stage planning with a mix of top-down and bottom-up planning approaches.
Change Management as an integral component of strategic planning
Change Management structure and team roles
Executive sponsorship
Diagnosing resistance to change
Engaging external consultants, if required
Outsourcing the Change Management process to alleviate 'positional power-politics'
Identification and removal of critical barriers for implementing change
Assuring and reassuring employees
Understanding individual beliefs, values and needs
Proper communication and training plans
Motivation & empowerment
Value creation as a measurement for Change Management and conflict resolution
Timing, incentives and recognition programs

Conclusion:

Since skeptical employees can elude reactions that can range from passive resistance to active disruption, organizations need to convince their employees to buy the idea of continual change. Very often, the Change Management process principally focuses on human behavior, as this is the easily reckonable aspect of human performance, and seeks to change 'behavior' without influencing 'core values and beliefs' that support an individual's behavior. As a result, individuals under pressure tend to revert to those behaviors that support their true beliefs and values, thereby restricting the benefits of the process to very short-term. A successful Change Management process tends to influence the individual at the core (identity, beliefs and values), rather than to simply try to change one's behavior momentarily.

Reference(s):

"Intelligent Leadership – Creating A Passion For Change" by Alan Hooper & John Potter (2001)